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"Is he smart and quick?" he asked. Page 99.

ROB CLAXTON'S STORY.

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BY

PARTHENE B. CHAMBERLAIN,

AUTHOR OF "MISTRESS OF THE HOUSE," "WHAT ABOUT FRED?"

"CHOSEN VESSELS," "A RARE PIECE OF WORK," ETC.



NEW YORK:
THOMAS Y. CROWELL & CO.,
No. 13 ASTOR PLACE.

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE.
CHAPTER I.	5
CHAPTER II.	20
CHAPTER III.	34
CHAPTER IV.	52
CHAPTER V.	67
CHAPTER VI.	80
CHAPTER VII.	96
CHAPTER VIII.	110
CHAPTER IX.	121
CHAPTER X.	133
CHAPTER XI.	145
CHAPTER XII.	154
CHAPTER XIII.	164
CHAPTER XIV.	174
CHAPTER XV.	184
CHAPTER XVI.	194
CHAPTER XVII.	204

	PAGE.
CHAPTER XVIII.	214
CHAPTER XIX.	225
CHAPTER XX.	234
CHAPTER XXI.	241
CHAPTER XXII.	253
CHAPTER XXIII.	265

ROB CLAXTON'S STORY.



CHAPTER I.

YES, there it is ! It looks very well written, as if it promised to be something very interesting ; but what sort of a story will it be, I wonder. I am sure I should never have thought of it myself.

Perhaps, as this is to be "Rob Claxton's Story," I ought to begin at the time when he began, which happened just fourteen years ago ; but, as I have only just lived right here every day, it wouldn't be much more to write than Topsy's "I growd." So I think I will commence with last week, when father enlisted, and was chosen captain of Company C.

He talked it all over with mother, and sister Katie, and me, and said he had felt ever since the war broke out that he ought to go. Mother and Katie felt very badly, and

cried, though they didn't say no. But I think it is grand to be a soldier, and fight for one's country.

Father said we must all have something to keep us busy and brave while he is away.

"Mother would have enough," he said, and I saw how his lips trembled when he said it, "for she would have to fill her place and his too. And Katie should write the story of the war, as complete a history as she could make out of every march, and every battle, and every hero."

I thought that would be a grand thing to do, and I felt a little hurt that he had not said that *I* should do that, I being the only boy in the family. But I didn't say any thing, and tried to look as if I had never thought of such a thing, and wouldn't have liked it if I had.

But father — I believe he always sees straight through such shams — looked at me, and said, —

"Katie can do this better than Robbie, for a great deal of new care and responsibility will come upon him. You are the only son

and brother, my boy, and the father will be away for no one knows how long."

"The only son and brother!" I had never thought of it that way before: I am afraid I have only thought of it to claim my rights. But that is not what father meant, I suppose. I think I know; and I mean to be so thoughtful and unselfish that mother will be surprised, and father too, when she writes him what a comfort Robert is. I know I haven't always been a comfort.

I was thinking so fast of this, that I forgot to care about Katie's "History of the War," when father said, —

"I have another plan for you, Robbie, — something that I think will interest you quite as much as Katie's work; but I will tell you about that this evening. I must go to the city now, and it is time you were going to school."

And in the evening he brought me this beautiful book, its pages all clean and white, and its name in gilt letters on the bright green cover.

I opened my eyes so wide when I saw it that father smiled, and said, —

"You have always liked to tell me every thing, Robert."

And so I have — better even than to mother, because he knows about boys.

It almost made me cry then, to think I should not have him to go to; and I know he saw it, for he put his arm across my shoulders, and said, —

"I don't want to lose any of my boy's confidence, and I don't want him to feel too lonely without father's sympathy: so I have bought this book for you to write all about yourself and all that interests you. It will be the most interesting story you could give me when I come home. Let the record be always a true one, my Robert, *no shams*. Be honest to yourself, and you can face the world. I *hope* it will be a *good* story; but, if there are muddy spots and bad places, you need not be afraid to put down, for you and me to see, what *God must see*. There will be histories of battles here," he said, laying his hand on the book, "if you write the story faithfully; for you will have many a tough one to fight before you get to be the

true, noble man we look for in our only son. Never yield to wrong; stand firm for the right in the smallest things as well as the greatest. But remember what I have told you so often, that you cannot stand *alone*: you have seen this many times already, and you will never be a *strong* man unless you are a man of God." He drew me close to him, and I knew he was praying for me in his heart. Afterwards he said, —

"And about this little book. I hope you will keep it looking as neatly as you can; for *whatever is worth doing at all is worth doing well*; but if you make mistakes in your book, or your life, don't be afraid to scratch them out, even though they leave an ugly blot or scar which can never be effaced. Better let the *erasure* show the honest sense of the error, and the effort to correct it, than to let it go unrighted."

I wanted to remember every word he had said: so I asked him to write it down for me, and I have copied it here just as he said it.

And so this is the beginning of my story.

This is the sixth day of June. I ought to have put that at the first, but I did not think of it.

JUNE 10. Father's company is to start next week. All the women in town are busy making every thing for their comfort they can; and the men march through the streets; and Will Collins puts on airs because he is going with them as drummer-boy. I thought I would like to go until I saw his mother watch him pass the house, with the great tears rolling down her cheeks; and Willie hung his head when he saw her, and I saw him raise his hand and draw it across his eyes.

If the war should last seven years, as some say it will, father can come home (a colonel may be), and I shall be old enough to go in his place. I don't ever mean to think that his going away may be for always.

I know mother almost feels as if it surely is, for she is so very pale. She never cries,—or at least, I never see her,—but her voice trembles sometimes, and it seems so very low and sweet. I cannot be noisy in

the house, even when I come in all excitement from our boys' parade, and my head full of "martial spirit."

It is like two different worlds *outside* and *inside* the house. Our village was never so lively before : it seems as if they expected to fight it right out here in town, everybody is so hurried and so excited. But at home we are all busy. Mother and Katie, it seems to me, have done mountains of sewing in the last ten days ; but every thing seems so *hushed*, as it did last summer when little Nannie was sick.

I watched mother and Katie yesterday when Mr. Glebe read about the last engagement, and how our brave men stood the fire. I had dropped my book on the floor and stood up to breathe freer ; but Katie sewed faster and faster, till her needle fairly flew ; only, when she passed mother the thread, she laid her hand softly over hers, and mother raised her eyes to Katie's a moment, and that was all, and the work went on : but I knew they understood each other perfectly. Katie is just like mother. I should have

thrown my arms around mother's neck, and kissed her, and said a great many things which would have only made it all more near and terrible, till I should quite have broken her down. Katie's way was best.

Father is cheerful: he does not laugh, and make light of the danger, as Lieutenant Easton does, and talk about "whipping the rebels, and being back here in less than no time," which sounds very much like a boy's whistling loud to keep up his courage. Father does not say any thing about what will be; but I know—for I heard him tell uncle Macey—that he has arranged all his business with Mr. Dunham, and mother understands all his plans.

I never heard him, or any one else, pray as he has these last two or three mornings. It seemed to me, and I don't think it was irreverent, as if he took hold of both the Lord's hands, and held them in his own, he seems so very near. I know what keeps him up so now, and mother too.

I have noticed mother calls him "Robert" lately, and he calls her "Margie": they

haven't often, since there have been so many of us children to say "Father" and "Mother."

I thought when father first had that long talk with me about trying to fill his place, and learning to think of others, that I should begin then, and do wonderful things. But I haven't, only a few little things. Sometimes, when father has been out, I have tried to relieve mother, and keep her from being worried, and her "Thank you, Robbie dear, that was very kind" has made me very happy. And father says often, that "it is the little things that make up the sum of life."

JUNE 12. This morning we all went down to have our pictures taken, — a group of us children with mother in the centre. I claimed the "post of honor," standing by mother. I thought it was my right, and Katie, though she is five years older, kindly gave it up to me, and sat with Sibyl and Nan in front. Father and mother smiled a little at my persistence, till I felt rather ashamed ; but father saw it, and said kindly, —

"Never mind, my boy. But it is one thing to take a position, and another to maintain it

manfully and faithfully: if you will do that, it is your rightful place. God make you strong to keep it always, my son!" he said in a tone which no one heard but me, with his hands on my shoulders, looking down into my eyes in a way I shall never forget.

After that, when the artist was ready, and we took our places, it seemed almost a solemn thing; and when I felt mother lean against me a little, if I am only four feet ten inches high, I felt as if I had a man's heart in me, and could never be quite the same thoughtless boy I had been. We had two of these groups,—one for us, and one for father to take with him. Then mother sat alone once; this is father's. And then there are five of father,—one for mother, and one for each of us; and we each had our own choice of a position for him in the pictures which were to be ours; and he made so much fun we grew quite merry over them. And so altogether I think this has been the pleasantest of any of these last days.

JUNE 16. They have gone! We had family prayers an hour before father left. Will

Collins was beating his drum even then. Father talked separately with each one of us, giving us each something to remember, even to little Nan, who always calls herself "Papa's pet." Mother had been so white all the morning I was afraid she would faint; and, after father had bade her "Good-by" in her own room, he said, —

"Katie darling, go to your mother by and by: she will need you—not just yet." And then he added, "I know that you will be her comfort and blessing, all that a daughter can be. God bless you, my precious daughter!"

I did not feel a bit jealous; for Katie, with her sweet, tender ways, *is* a blessing to every one around her; and she is more to mother in some ways, I know, than ten sons could be.

Father had said that Sibyl and I might go to the corner, where we could see the company gathering to march to the depot; and as we walked quickly down the street, each of us with our hand tightly clasped in father's (I felt as if I were a very little

boy then, I believe I should almost have been glad to have been carried in his arms), I thought how many men had already been killed in these few months, and almost cried out. I know he guessed what I was thinking about, for he pressed my hand, and said over softly a verse from one of the psalms he read this morning:—

“He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.”

I am afraid I am not very patriotic after all. The country is everybody's,—only a very small part of it belongs to a boy like me,—but father is *ours*, and there never was such a father.

I did not think so much about it though, after we got in sight of the square. The whole street seemed alive, and the music was so fine! When we came in sight, the men gave three hearty cheers for their captain, and every hat swung in the air. Father looked *splendid* in his new uniform as he took his place at the head of them, taller and nobler looking than any man there. And when I heard a gentleman who seemed to

be a stranger speak of him to Judge Ulman, and the judge answered, "Yes, sir; Captain Claxton is one of our best citizens: it will be a great loss to our town, but the very best officer they could have chosen," I was very proud, and wondered if I should ever be a man like my father.

It was a fine sight when they marched down the street, keeping time to the music; and the walks on both sides were lined with people, some crying, and some shouting.

I was sorry Katie had not come; but she wouldn't. When I asked her, she said quickly, "No, no," and then kissed me, and said, "But I am glad for you to go, Robbie; and you shall tell me all about it afterwards, if you like."

They gave three cheers for the friends at home, on the Square; but father would have no cheering when they got on board the cars. They stood, still as death, in one solid mass, with their uncovered heads bowed while the minister, old Mr. Dennison, prayed for God's blessing to go with them; and then, quiet and solemn, they stepped, two and two, into

the cars; and that was the last we saw of them.

Sibyl and I came home the back way, to avoid the crowd, as father had told us to do.

EVENING. It was such a long, long afternoon! Katie said mother tried to come out and be with us, but she was so weak and faint that Katie persuaded her to lie down; and she read to her until at last she fell asleep.

Then Katie came out, and Nannie with her, and said we would all go and sit under the oak by the garden-gate; and she and Sibyl would bring their knitting (Sibyl has knitted one pair of socks herself), and I should read aloud.

For a long time the book was nothing but *words*; for I couldn't think of what I was reading about at all, and I saw Katie dash off the tears when she sat down on the new seat which father made only last week. But at last we did get interested, and the tea-bell rang before we thought of it.

Mother did not waken, and Katie said it would do her more good to sleep: so we ate

our supper without her. After tea Katie had to go down town, and took Nannie with her; Sibyl went to look over her lessons for to-morrow; and I came up here to write. I am so glad father left me this to do!

CHAPTER II.

JUNE 17. It is not quite so bad as I thought it would be. Last night when I stopped writing it was too early to go to bed, and I did not know just what to do. It seemed odd and cold any way to go to bed without having father read and pray; and I wanted, like a baby, to see mother.

I sat in the dark, thinking about it, when I heard her calling me. The lamps were lighted in the back-parlor, the chairs were drawn about the centre-table, and little Nan, undressed, ready for bed, sat in mother's lap. Mother called me to her, and, putting her arm around me, said she was afraid she had been very selfish. She was sorry Katie did not awaken her. And then, when Katie and Sibyl came in, she asked all about the going, and we told it all over. The tears ran down her cheeks a good many times; but she

looked brighter and stronger than she did in the morning. After we had told her, mother said, —

“Father has gone because it was right for him to go. We know he will always be brave and good wherever he is, and we must try to be as brave and good at home. We promised him this, and he will think a great deal about it. We will not feel that he has gone out of our home-world, that we are quite separated from him : we will keep him always in our hearts, as he will keep us in his ; and the same dear heavenly Father will take care of us all.”

She took the Bible, and, handing it to Katie, said, —

“You shall read, dear, the 91st Psalm to-night.” When Katie had finished, mother said, “We will sing the good old hymn, ‘How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord!’ Robbie must lead our singing now.”

We all sang the hymn, and afterwards mother prayed with us ; and though I have never thought as much as I ought, perhaps, of the family prayers, I did feel real glad that we

were not going to do without them. I had not thought of mother praying in father's place. I wonder that I didn't. What a beautiful psalm that is! Mother chose it, I know, thinking of father, and it was a comfort to us all. I must be sure to be always on hand at prayers, or I don't know how they would get along; for mother can't sing much, and Katie—I don't suppose she could start a tune so that any one could sing it. They all depend upon me: so I must be sure always to be present. I will practise more, for I do like to have things go off as well as possible; and father will be glad to know that I improve in singing.

JUNE 18. This morning I tried to think how I could be of more use. I tried to recollect just what father used to do. The only thing that I could think of that I could do was the marketing. Father always did it on his way to the store, and I shall have time enough before school every morning, if I learn all my lessons in the evening. So after breakfast I said,—

“Mother, if you will tell me what you need, I can do the marketing, can't I?”

She said, "Why, yes, Robert. I should like to have you go ; for I cannot very well spare Ann in the morning, and Katie or I would have to go."—"I will take the job then," I said. So I took mother's orders, and trudged off with my basket.

The market was full, and the men were all busy. I have learned before this that people are served a good deal according to their size : so my turn would come last but one, and the last was a bit of a girl who looked hot and frightened. I had never bought a dinner, but I thought it would not do to show my ignorance : so I said in a very business-like way, "I think I will take this beefsteak, sir."

Mr. Duly looked over his shoulder from the weights, and said with a loud laugh, "That beefsteak, bub, came out of a sheep ; but you can have it all the same—seven-teen cents a pound."

Of course they all laughed, and I felt cheap enough. He needn't have called me "bub" anyway. I asked for a beefsteak, and got away as quickly as I could, think-

ing I would go to the other market next time. I am afraid I was quite "out of sorts," as Ann says. I told mother that I did not like the market-man at all. She seemed surprised, and said, "Father always thought Mr. Duly a very ready, accommodating man." I said that he was a surly fellow anyway. Then I thought that was not quite true, for he was certainly in high spirits: so I added, "Not exactly surly, perhaps, but rough." Mother smiled a little, and said business men did not have much time to waste in words, but she believed Mr. Duly to be a very good man. I could not make up my mind to tell her the whole story; but I have put it all down here, because—I don't know: I am afraid I am rather apt to put on airs. I know father used to try to make me see it sometimes; but father never snubbed anybody.

JUNE 19. Mother gave me father's place at the table. She said, though I heard a little sigh when she looked at the vacant place, "Katie, you or Robert will have to take the head of the table now." And Katie answered gayly, "Rob, then. We must have a gentle-

man." I wondered if she knew how much I should like it.

I was very awkward the first time. In trying to carve I spilled the gravy over the clean tablecloth, and sent a piece of meat flying into Sibyl's lap: still, no one laughed but little Nan. Mother said kindly, "Every thing needs practice," and before the meat was put on the table at noon she called me out, and showed me the best way to cut it, and how to handle the carver properly. "What is worth doing at all is worth doing well, you know," she said; "and every gentleman should know how to preside gracefully at the table." I am improving since. When father carved, I did not suppose there was any knack about it.

I thought yesterday that I would surely go down to the lower market this morning; but mother wanted I should ask Mr. Duly to buy some poultry for her: so I could not avoid going there. I made myself just as tall as I could, and thought I would be so dignified that Mr. Duly should see I was not a "bub." It was late. The morning customers were nearly all served. The boy was waiting on a

woman, and Mr. Duly was busy at his desk ; but when I asked for "a nice roast," he laid down his pen, and came forward himself, saying, "Are you our Captain Claxton's boy?"

"Yes, sir," I said, changing my opinion of the man all over, he looked so bright and hearty.

"Well, then, I suppose you will have the marketing all on your shoulders now. Let me show you some things about it, so you will know what are 'choice cuts.' I take it you are a boy that would like to be able to judge for yourself, and I guess just now you know rather more of books than of 'sirloins' and 'shanks.' I remember you right well at the last examination."

While he was talking, he had been taking down large pieces of meat, and then he showed me the different kinds, and where were the best parts of each, and all about them, so that I think I can know just what I want. It was very kind, and I am sure I thanked him with all my heart.

After I went home I told mother the whole story, and she said, —

“You need never be ashamed of ignorance, Robert, about any thing which it has not been your duty to learn. None of us can know all that is to be learned in this world. But, when any thing comes to be your business, take pains to inform yourself thoroughly, so that you can do it intelligently and well. The wisest can learn something, as well as teach something, and so all may be useful to each other. Such pride has little foundation, Robbie dear, and, if we indulge it, we shall get a good many ‘snubs,’ as you call them, and find a good many ‘surly fellows.’”

JUNE 22. This morning we had our first letter from father. I brought it from the office myself. Mother had said we must not begin to look for one till to-morrow: so it was a pleasant surprise. It was not very long, for he was on the way, and had only been two days from home; but there was a message for each of us, and some funny stories about the camp, and we were very glad to get it. Then his “God bless and keep you all, my darlings” was worth a dozen common letters.

Right on top of that I had a quarrel with Sibyl, of which I feel so ashamed. Mother and Katie think she is not well and strong, and I suppose she isn't; but sometimes I think she is only lazy and selfish, and I get out of patience. I was reading very busily, and had just come to such a splendid place, when mother asked me to get the clean table linen, and take it down to Ann. I knew Sib was doing nothing but drumming on the window, and I didn't want to leave my book: so I said crossly that it was girls' work, and Sib could go. Sib is quick enough to answer, if she is slow about some things. She said spitefully, "And is it girls' work to bring up the wood and kindling, which you left for Katie to do last night?"

I had not once thought of it. I threw myself on the sofa with my book, just after tea, and only went out when mother called me to prayers. I was sorry, for I knew Katie had helped Ann all day, and had a bad headache in the evening. But I didn't a bit like to be told of it by Sib in that cool way, and I felt my face as hot as fire.

I should have waited for mother to say, as she did very decidedly, "Sibyl, hush ! Robert will talk with me about that"; but I said at the same time something very loud and fierce, I hardly know what. "Robert !" mother said, and that was all; but she looked so shocked, and she laid her hand over Sibyl's mouth to keep back the angry reply, and sent her out to the garden.

She did look pale and tired as she went out. I am afraid she is not very well, after all, and I couldn't help seeing she was not as able to run up and down stairs as a stout, healthy boy.

In the mean time Nan had got the things from Katie, and carried them down, and then ran out to find Sibyl. Mother and I were left alone.

She sewed and sewed, and I tried to read; but it wasn't interesting now. I could not tell where or what I was reading. I thought she would talk to me, but she did not; and I would rather have gone away, but I did not like to pass by her. It was as much as half an hour, and I could see Sibyl sitting

on the steps, leaning her head on her hand, and watching Nannie roll on the grass.

At last Katie called mother. She put away her sewing and came over to me, and, laying her cheek against mine, said, "Oh, my dear boy, I am so sorry!" and I felt her tears on my face.

I cried after she went out. I couldn't keep in any longer. Her tone and way meant so much. I understood it all, I think: that she is very anxious and tender about poor Sibyl, (what a brute I was to her!) and that she was so disappointed in me.

I used to be quarrelsome when I was little, and I troubled her very much; but for a long while I have tried to be a better boy, and I really thought I had grown to be tolerably patient and good. But now I have spoiled it all. Oh, dear! I am afraid that this story of Rob Claxton is going to be full of "muddy spots."

EVENING. When I had written so far, mother came up stairs and knocked at my door. We had such a good talk! Mother's talks always do me good, for she knows just

the right time. While I am angry, she always leaves me to myself, and that is about as poor company as a boy can have.

After that I went down and played with Sibyl, at what she liked best, until she was tired out. She did not use to tire so soon. I know last winter she could coast and skate with the toughest of us. Dear Sibyl! I will try to be kind and gentle with her always.

Then I went to find Katie ironing in the kitchen. I watched her a little while, not knowing just how to begin. She looked so heated I asked if I couldn't iron for her.

"Why, Rob!" she said, opening her eyes wide, "ironing isn't boys' work."

"I think it is," I said, "if carrying wood up stairs for a lazy boy is girls' work: don't you?"

She knew what I meant then, and said in her sweet way, "Oh, I knew you had only forgotten it, dear, and I did not like to call you. But Nannie's ruffles," she said laughing—"no, I don't believe you are equal to them. Thank you."

So now I have done all I can to "scratch out" these mistakes, and I will be more careful and more watchful over myself after this. And that other thing. Mother told me I must go to God for help, and I have tried; but my prayers are only words, words: they don't seem to mean any thing. It isn't so with mother's or father's. What does make such a difference?

JULY 10. Another letter from father to-day. He wrote they were ordered into service—were to start at daybreak. I could see in every word and line that he was thinking it might be his last letter—as if he could hardly bear to stop writing. It was such a precious letter! Oh, I am sure I cannot be a bad boy with such a father, and he hopes so much from me! I would rather die than disappoint him, and not make the man he wants me to be.

JULY 11.—MORNING. I am too early this morning. I believe there is no one else up in the house. I came up after prayer last night, and went right to bed; but I could not go to sleep for a long time for thinking of mother's prayer.

In the chapter she read was the passage, "As seeing Him who is invisible"; and she does see him in just that way. She talked with Jesus, opened her heart, all our hearts, to him, as if he stood beside her; put father in his care, as if she knew that he would be there in the fight, where she could not go; and asked for strength and patience for herself, as if she knew she had only to ask for it—as she would have asked father for something he would have given her at once.

I thought it put something of her feeling into me, and I came up stairs as quickly as I could, and kneeled down, and tried to pray like her. But it was so different! I felt as soon as I began as if the Lord isn't acquainted with me or I with him. I have *said* my prayers every night and morning since I can remember; but I am afraid that is all, and I feel as if I was a stranger.

I wish father would come home. I haven't told any one what I have made up my mind to.

CHAPTER III.

JULY 20. School closed to-day, three weeks later than usual, on account of the long vacation last spring. I did bear a good examination. I have studied real hard, and don't believe any of the boys felt unkind toward Charlie Elliott and me for bearing off the prizes. They all said we had fairly earned them, and that made it so much pleasanter.

I shall never forget the lesson my first prize taught me two years ago. I was so determined to have it, that I could think of nothing else at home or at school. I was glad when a boy missed; glad even when Charlie Elliott was sick, and lost his place. I knew I was, though I tried to make myself and everybody else believe that I was sorry. But I know that father saw through it all, right down into my heart; for he looked so sober.

I was glad, too, when Frank Moore lost his history, and could not find it until it was too late, and so missed his lesson, and lost his place in the class, when I could just as well have lent him mine. I had learned it perfectly the night before; but Frank did not know that. And how mean I felt when he said in his frank way to the teacher, that he could not borrow, because school-books were like umbrellas: everybody wanted them at once!

And that wasn't all. I said a good many unkind things, some very mean things, about boys that were working as hard and as honestly as I. And so I gained the prize, and almost lost some of my best friends,—it was a good while before I got them back, too,—and lost father's approval.

When Mr. Jones praised me, father said kindly, he thought I had studied very hard both at home and at school, and he was glad to see that I had been thorough in what I had been over; yet I saw that there was something back of it which troubled him, and that he was not satisfied with me.

After school, when I was turning over the leaves of the prize-book, admiring it and the flattering inscription on the fly-leaf, and trying to make myself believe that it was giving me as much pleasure as I had fancied it would, — how well I remember it all! — I said carelessly, to call his attention to it again, “Father, how much do you suppose it cost?” There was no one else in the porch.

“It cost Mr. Jones about four dollars, I suppose,” he said; and then, closing the book, and looking straight into my eyes, “but how much has it cost you, Robert? Think about it, and then tell me.”

I had been putting on a happy outside; but I had been troubled and miserable all the time. Not a boy congratulated me, and I heard two or three whisper, “It would have been Charlie Elliott’s, if he had not been sick,” “mean,” and a good many worse things, which it was not at all pleasant to hear.

So, when father came right to the point, it broke me right down, and I told him all, every little thing; and I know the lesson I learned was worth more to me than a dozen prizes.

How I did wish father could have been there to-day! I don't think I have "run over" anybody in the race this time, or broken "the Golden Rule," which father talked to me about then. I know I enjoyed this prize. I could look every boy honestly in the face when I took it to my seat, and not see a sour look. And the "Three cheers for Claxton and Elliott!" on the playground did me almost as much good as the prize itself.

Mother was proud and pleased, I know; but she did not understand all the undercurrent, as father would. Mother is writing to him to-night.

AUGUST 5. There is another company making up in the village. They are all young men,—our best, too. There is not quite as much excitement as there was when the first company was formed. I heard this afternoon that Richard Hathaway had enlisted. I wonder if it is true, and if Katie knows it.

AUGUST 6. After tea last night, while mother and I sat on the front porch, and I was reading the paper aloud, Richard came up, and took a seat on the porch with us. I

asked him if he was going with the new company.

"I haven't decided yet, Robert," he said: "I will tell you as soon as I know myself.—Mrs. Claxton, can I see Miss Katie a little while?"

And now I know it all; for I hadn't gone to bed when Katie came up stairs. I had just finished my history lesson, and she told me all about it; that when the war is over, if Richard comes back, he will claim our darling Katie. And he would not put down his name till he had talked it over with her. I think that was right in him.

And Katie told him to go. I wonder if I could have given as much to my country as she does. Now that she is to lose Richard so soon, I must try to be as much company for her as I can. I wish there were not five whole years between us; but she never makes me feel little. I am always proud of Katie's way with me.

Mina Moore acts as if she was angry because Frank is growing so. I believe she would have liked to keep him in frocks in the

nursery; and she never goes out with him, and is always snubbing him, if he says any thing, with something about "being seen and not heard," or "little pitchers have big ears." I don't see how such sisters can expect to have good brothers. Katie often invites me to go out with her; and for almost a year now, since I have grown so tall, she takes my arm as if I were the greatest beau in town. And she never snubs me, as Mina does Frank. I don't know how we can ever spare her.

SEPTEMBER 6. The company went last week. Richard Hathaway is first lieutenant.

Such a dreary week this has been! There has been skirmishing where father is, and we hear there is a great deal of sickness in his regiment. We get reports one day which are contradicted the next, and we cannot know any thing certain. I have been in a perfect fever,—ten times worse than mother or Katie. I cannot keep steady at any thing.

The minister came in to-day. He said very little, as if he thought talking were not just the thing. He stood a moment

with mother's and Katie's hands in his, and then, with trembling voice, said, "Let us go to God together."

We all knelt, and it seemed as if we did "go to God," or as if he came to us. I wish I could have staid there always. Twice he asked, I remember, that we might "rest in God." That is just what mother and Katie do all the time; but with me it did not last ten minutes after Mr. Dennison had gone.

I am just as restless and impatient as ever. If I could only go there, and see and know—or do something; but waiting is just what boys can't do.

What a splendid fellow Charlie is! He saw how flurried I was this afternoon, and it seemed as if every thing I wanted was right at my hand just when I wanted it. Charlie did it, and so quietly that I scarcely noticed it. Every one is very kind; and little Willie Easton, whose father is said to have been taken prisoner, has been loaded down with peanuts, apples, and all the "goodies" the boys could find. I suppose some folks

would think that didn't help the matter much ; but we all wanted to show in some way how sorry we were. We couldn't do any thing else, and I know it does comfort one to have sympathy.

Mother went over to see Mrs. Easton this afternoon. It came into my head to-day to wonder whether it makes any difference in trouble ; for Mrs. Easton isn't a Christian : she is very gay and fashionable. I wonder if she keeps up, and waits as brave and patient as mother and Katie, or whether she frets and worries like me.

SEPTEMBER 7. Mother did not say any thing about Mrs. Easton last night when I was in the house. But the boys told me that Mrs. Brown, who boards there, says she never saw any one go on so. She moans, and cries, and walks the floor, and doesn't eat or sleep or take any notice of the children.

Willie wasn't at school. I met him, when I came home, drawing the cart, and little Myrtle trudging along, holding his hand. She was whining, and crying for "mamma" ; and Willie put his arm around her, and told her

little brother would take care of her : she mustn't trouble poor mamma ; and then he tried to amuse her with watching the birds. Willie looked forlorn and tired, like a little orphan.

Mrs. Brown told Mina Moore that Willie had taken care of the little ones all day, and that Mrs. Easton's trouble seemed to make her *selfish*. It must be a poor home where the mother is selfish.

SEPTEMBER 10. We have just had a good, long letter from father, written since the engagement. He was not wounded, nor were any of his men, seriously ; some of them slightly. Hurrah ! I want to shout, I am so glad. He wrote a good deal about the fight, and how nobly the men stood their ground. But I suppose all that belongs to Katie's "history." Only this I must write too, for I am sure it belongs to father's son : the report in to-day's paper made special mention of the bravery of Captain Claxton, who fought his way, single-handed, to the rescue of one of his men, where, supporting his charge, and fighting against fearful odds, he maintained his

ground till relief was sent. Isn't that glorious? Father didn't say any thing about it.

He didn't write a word about Easton. Mrs. Easton came up here as soon as she heard we had a letter. Poor woman! She looks as if she had been sick a month; and she was so disappointed! But mother assured her that "no news must be good news." Her husband is second lieutenant; and if he had been captured, or wounded seriously, she knew father would not have omitted to mention it. Mrs. Easton looked into her face so eagerly, so *hungrily*! I have often heard of "taking heart," but I saw it now; for it seemed as if her whole heart came slowly into her eyes, and, when she went away, her face was almost bright and happy.

Mother has never known much of her; but now I know just how it will be. She will make a little place in her heart and in her prayers for her, and she will do her good. She asked her a good many kind questions about her children, and praised Willie; and he deserves it, for he is a dear little fellow.

Mrs. Easton looked as if she just recollected

them, and then she was impatient to go home. And so I dare say they will have their mother again to-night, and perhaps Willie will be at school again to-morrow: he hasn't been for three or four days.

OCTOBER 4. We have something new in our school: it is grand, too. Mr. Jones asked the older boys to remain a few minutes after school was dismissed this noon, and told us that he was about to take a new work, or rather a new phase of his work, and in this he wanted the hearty coöperation of his scholars. He said he had been for some time visiting that little clump of Irish cabins, down on the railroad, two miles from the village, trying to do something for the poor people.

There is need enough of it; for I don't believe there ever was a dirtier, rougher, wickeder set.

He had been trying to persuade some of the boys to come to school, and he thought he should succeed. What he wanted now was a champion for each of them, as they should come into the school, and for this he would receive volunteers.

I was so interested in what he said, that I believe I had my mouth open to speak as soon as he should stop; but he went on to say that, before any entered the service, he wanted they should understand the work and count the cost, — whether they intended to be faithful at their posts, for he did not want any but good soldiers. Each boy should have his own charge; should stand by him, in the house and on the playground, as far as could be right; should help him in his studies, and should be a friend to him; so that he would have no need to feel lonely or discouraged, and so, perhaps, go back to his ignorance. He should check him kindly and faithfully in every evil habit, for they have a great many, as we should have had, probably, if we came out of such homes. He should try in every way to elevate and refine them.

We could scarcely wait, some of us, for him to call for his volunteers; but he raised his hand, and said he had not finished yet. He wanted us first to think very earnestly and seriously, because, if we took up the work, we could not lay it down at will. It was not

fun or play, but real, earnest work. They would often be very annoying society. We would find them coarse and dull, perhaps vicious, and, like ourselves, often ungrateful. That, if we were to do them any good, it must be chiefly by example: so we would need to keep double guard over ourselves.

Finally, that it would not be merely for a week, or a month, but, he hoped, for the whole winter. That we were to think of it, and talk about it with our parents, and after school to-night he would receive our names.

Six of us enlisted to-night. Mr. Jones said he thought that would be enough. Perhaps he would not be able to get so many of them to come. He looked very grave all the time, as if it were something very solemn, and put our names down in order in his book.

Charlie Elliott's comes first: so he will have the first boy; and mine will be the next. Mr. Jones says they will not come this week. I wish they would. Now I have something to do,—a real work. I mean to have my little Irish boy the smartest of any of them before spring, and a perfect little gentleman.

I shall have to improve my own manners somewhat. Won't father be proud of my work!

The ladies of the village are going to clothe them, under Mr. Jones's directions. Mother and Katie will help. Mother talked to me about it to-night in a way I had not thought of.

I went down to the store with her, and when we came home I was talking very fast about "my boy," and what I was going to do for him. Mother listened to all I had to say, and then she asked, "Will you help him to become a Christian, Robert?"

I hadn't thought of that. She knows I can't do that—I wish I could. But I will take him to my Sunday-school. I can't do that, though; for they have a mission-school down there now.

After father comes home, maybe I shall get to be just what I ought to be. I do wish I was a Christian, more than I ever did before. I believe it would be such a good thing for this poor Irish boy.

OCTOBER 3. Willie Easton came down to

tell us that they had had a letter from his father. It seems he has not been a prisoner at all: it was a false report.

Mr. Jones says he thinks the Irish boys will be ready to begin school next week. Katie says it is an event as great as the Japanese embassy.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 11. Only one of the "Irish delegation" reported himself at school this morning: so this is Charlie Elliott's.

Mr. Jones called Charlie to the desk, and told the little fellow that Charlie was going to be a good friend to him, and would help him whenever he needed help. I had to vacate my seat for the new-comer.

I had not thought of that. Term in and term out Charlie and I have sat together. I am afraid I was a little cross, because Charlie evidently had expected it, and took it as a part of the agreement. I said something, rather snappishly, I guess, about his being glad of a change, perhaps. He looked surprised and hurt, and said,—

"Why, Rob! But I understood we were to do so, and that seemed the hardest part

of it, old fellow. I shall miss you every minute; but I suppose Mr. Jones thought we could not do much for them without this."

I had not once thought, while we were talking and I was moving my books, that he had eyes and ears,—this Irish boy,—till I turned to go away. Then he pulled my sleeve, in a frightened sort of way; and when I looked at him, and he tried to speak, his eyes full of tears and his lips all of a quiver,—

"If you please," he said, "I didn't mean to—is there any mistake? have I got the wrong seat?"

I felt like taking him right up in my arms, he looked so like a little scared bird. He is very thin and pale, but he has the softest, prettiest brown eyes I ever saw. He is only ten years old, and very small for that.

He looks up to Charlie as if he were the greatest man in the land. He is not a bit like a "paddy"; for his mother is an Englishwoman, and a real lady, Mr. Jones says.

All the boys in the school fell in love with little Jamie, he has such shy, pretty ways. Charlie is very proud and fond of him already. I hope my boy will be just such a little darling. I have been making a pretty ball for him to-night. I haven't let any one know it, though. I suppose he will be along to-morrow.

OCTOBER 12. Jamie Barnes came alone again to-day. Charlie has been over this evening to study with me. He says he showed Jamie about his lessons a little, but that he was so bright and anxious to learn that it was no bother at all; and after school he stopped him a minute, and said, —

“How good you are! Do I trouble you very much? My mother thanks you, too.”

Charlie almost cried when he told of it. He says if there is to be any refining done, he thinks Mr. Jones had better put him under James's care, for he has such dainty, pretty ways; and though he does come from an Irish hovel, he has never a coarse or an improper word. He always calls Charlie “Master Elliott.” We boys thought it made Charlie feel

rather important, and teased him a little about it: so he said he would tell Jamie not to call him so. But Mr. Jones heard it, and said no; if his mother had instructed him to do so, Charlie had better not remark upon it at all. I rather like it, though. "Master Claxton" would sound first-rate.

He says there are two more coming to-morrow. I tried to find out something about them, but he only said they were Mr. Rooney's boys, and then the bell rang, and we had to take our seats.

CHAPTER IV.

OCTOBER 13. He has come! I am so glad to get up here with my "story," where I can let myself out; for to mother, and Katie, and at school, I must try to put a bold face on. I "felt as if I should sink," as I have heard old Mrs. Smith say, as soon as I saw him! Let me see if I can describe him.

To begin with, his name is Mike Rooney. He is fully as tall as I am, I don't know but taller; with great, broad, slouching shoulders, a bushy head of coarse yellow hair, thick lips, eyes which I suppose must have a little color in them, but they looked almost all white as he stared around the room, and great brown freckles all over his face, and warts all over his huge hands.

I tried very hard not to show how "taken aback" I was; for there was a half-titter all around the room when he was led to his seat

by Mr. Jones. Mr. Jones hushed that, though, with one sweeping glance.

Jamie Barnes's little pale face had a scared look when he passed him, and he shrank closer to Charlie. I dare say he is a regular bully. I looked at his hand, as he held it, awkwardly cracking the knuckles, and thought he might knock little Jamie's brains out at a blow.

Mr. Jones came to our seat, after school opened, to arrange Mike's lessons for him, telling him that if he needed to know any thing about them he could ask me, and that I could help and befriend him; and talked with him kindly for a few minutes, to make him feel more at ease.

While he was talking he held my slate in his hand, and when he gave it back to me, I found on it: "*A good soldier must not be daunted at difficulties, must be patient, discreet, and brave.*" I am sure I thanked him with all my heart, that he did appreciate that it was a pretty hard case.

When recess came I thought I could not go out and face the boys, and take my place

in the games, with this great, lumbering paddy at my side, though I knew this was a part of the agreement. I pretended to be very busy with my history lesson; but I caught the broad grin on Will Harnden's face, as he passed my seat with a loud "Ahem!" Charlie Elliott whispered, "I would go out, Rob." I knew he comprehended the whole thing perfectly, and felt for me. But there were Will Harnden, and Harry Anderson, and Dorr Blakeslee, who did not enlist in the service, and laughed at those who did; it would do them too much good. I should have to face it some time, but I meant to put it off as long as I could.

When all the boys around us had gone, the paddy shook my shoulder and said, —

"Come, now, bean't ye goin' along?"

I was going to say no, but Mr. Jones's keen eyes absolutely drove me out of the house; I knew it was of no use. While I was putting on my cap, I saw Mike catch Jamie's arm, and heard him whisper, —

"Stop a minnit, can't ye, Jim? I want ye to tell me who's me fine gintlemin yon. I didn't hear who the masther called him."

"It is Master Robert Claxton," Jamie said, hurrying on to find Charlie.

I felt very strongly tempted to sneak out the side-door, and go off by myself; but there was something in me that wouldn't let me: so I went to Mike and said, —

"We play ball at the back of the house: will you come?"

He did not answer, but followed along behind me.

As soon as we came in sight, Will Harnden shouted, "Hurrah for Claxton and Rooney!" But only a few laughed, and Charlie Elliott came over and said to Mike, in his pleasant way, —

"Your brother has not come yet, has he? Jamie told me Mr. Rooney had two boys coming to our school."

"That same's thrue. Ow'n's me brother," Mike said, in a more respectful way even, than he had answered Mr. Jones. "He han't got his job o' praties done yet, Ow'n han't. Soon's iver he's shet o' that, he's comin' along, and the McCarthy byes, an' old Biddy O'Flinn's Denny, the spalpeen, — thim's all comin' the morra."

"I hope you will all like our school," Charlie said, as politely as he would have said it to the best dressed, most polished boy in the land. Mike grinned, and colored, and stared, and finally fell to cracking his knuckles again.

Just then Jamie called Master Elliott to come and show the little boys something about their play, and we all went over there. Jamie whispered to me, "I wish Denny O'Flinn had come first; he is a nice boy, is Denny."

Oh, if my boy had only been like Jamie, I could have done any thing for him.

When we took our places in the game, I gave Mike a bat, and showed him how to use it. The ball which I made on purpose was in my desk, and *I left it there*. It was made of pretty red and black leather. I was thinking of such a little fellow as Jamie when I made it. There goes the second bell! I swallowed my dinner as quickly as I could, and have written ever since just as fast as I could write. I feel better.

EVENING. When I was going out of the

house this noon, mother stopped me to ask if I would like to bring my *protégé* home with me to tea, for I had asked her a week ago if I might. I said I guessed not, to-day. I am so glad they didn't ask much about him. I suppose they see that I don't want to talk about it. I told them only that he had come, and Katie asked if he was as pretty as Jamie Barnes. I wonder what she will think if she ever sees him.

After I passed Connelly's dirty grocery, on my way to school, some one called out, "Arrah, Bob! wait a minute now, can't ye?" And I heard him say to some one in the grocery as he came out, "Bob Claxton and me's cronies, and we sit fornenst in the school yon." Now if there is any thing I do hate it is being called "Bob." No one has ever called me so except to tease me.

He grows more and more disagreeable as he gets better acquainted. He handles my books and papers till I can hardly keep my hands off from him, and "Bobs" me till I am almost wild. It is too bad. I had thought so much about what a good work I was going

to do ; but I never counted upon such material to work upon. What is the use of trying to make any thing out of this vile, uncouth paddy? It just can't be done. And to think of having him by my side or at my heels all winter.

OCTOBER 14. The paddies are all in now but "Ow'n" Rooney. They are not very attractive, to be sure, any of them, except Jamie Barnes ; but there are none of the rest quite so bad as my Mike. I have showed him about his lessons to-day, and told him his moves on the play-ground, and I am sure that is all I agreed to do ; I don't know what more Mr. Jones could expect of me. And when he talked incorrectly I told him that was not right at all, that it was ridiculous to use two negatives together ; he looked as blank as if I were talking Greek to him, and I don't think he appreciated it, for I heard him tell McCarthy that I was "rale stiff like." I am sure I want the brute to keep his distance, if I can make him.

OCTOBER 18. It is miserable weather, and every thing seems to go wrong. I don't

think our school is half as pleasant as it used to be. How could it be with half a dozen wild paddies turned loose upon us? I think Mr. Jones is very exacting too, this quarter. I am sure if I did miss a few questions in that philosophy lesson, it was very hard.

And then when Mike didn't understand his questions in simple arithmetic, — they are so simple I shouldn't think they could puzzle a baby, — and grew red in the face, and looked as if he were almost ready to bawl, Mr. Jones didn't reprove him, he only looked sharply at me.

OCTOBER 16. I found a note on my desk this morning, when I came in from recess, from Mr. Jones, inviting me to spend the evening with him. I wonder if it is for any thing special. I believe I am dreading it a little. I don't know why I should, for he often invites one or two of the boys to his room. I have been twice, and enjoyed it very much.

I wish I didn't have to sit with that disgusting creature. He spits all over the floor.

I spoke to him about it this morning—told him I couldn't put up with it any longer; and he flared up, and muttered, "be jabers, he niver 'ud come to school to be run over by big-feelin' gintry, 'cause they wore fine clothes," and doubled up his great warty fists under the desk. I don't see why the worst one of the whole pack should have fallen to me.

The rest of them do seem to be improving very fast, that's a fact. Even Barney McCarthy, who, I should say, is next to Mike,—an ugly-looking fellow he is,—seems like another boy "intirely," and Frank Moore says he isn't bad at all, considering—he is sure he should have been quite as bad or worse if he had been Pat McCarthy's boy. Perhaps that is true. I wonder what sort of boy I should have been if I had grown up in that hovel of the Rooney's. "Biddy O'Flinn's Denny" says that Rooney drinks, and Mrs. Rooney too sometimes, and she scolds, and "there's niver a bit of pace in the house at all, at all." Perhaps that is what gave Mike that dogged look.

EVENING. It is late, but I cannot go to sleep till I have opened my heart here. I know now what Mr. Jones wanted of me. I believe I will write it all down for I may need to look at it sometimes.

He was very kind, and talked with me a little about father, about my studies, and recommended some books for me to read that he thought I would like. Then he said, —

“And how are you getting along with Mike Rooney?”

I did not say any thing; for I did not know what to say. And he went on, —

“I was down there last night, Robert. I wish you could have been with me. Rooney was drunk, and his wife was berating him in the vilest language I ever heard from a woman. The family — there are six of them, all boys — were out of doors, quarrelling. Mike was sitting on an old box, trying to study out an arithmetic lesson — perhaps you may remember something about that lesson, Robert. And an older brother, a great, burly, vicious fellow of eighteen, as bad as his father,

—Mike is almost pleasant beside him,—was teasing and tormenting him for settin' himself up for the likes of a gintlemin, asthore, thryin' to git larnin', the more fool he! And at last, in the din, Mike closed his book with an angry oath, and said drearily he reckoned he might as well gin up.

“I didn't stop; for I had no time,—my errand was to a sick boy down by the river,—but it has been in my heart all day, and I sent for you, Robert, to take counsel with you. Here is this boy—about your own age, isn't he?—in as deep darkness and ignorance and degradation, at our very doors, as if he were in a heathen land, reaching up feebly to be lifted into a better life,—a life which shall make a man of him.

“*What shall we do with him, Robert?* Shall we push him back to his degradation and misery? We need only let go, break off his frail hold, and you are free again, free to choose your own associates and your own pleasure. And, after all, it is only a poor Irish boy's soul. *Shall we let go, Robert?*”

I never felt so in all my life. It seemed

as if I could see poor Mike struggling, and I pushing him down. I thought I should choke. I wanted to throw myself on the floor and cover my face. But Mr. Jones was waiting for an answer, and at last I said, very low, —

“Only try me a little longer, Mr. Jones. I will try now, indeed I will.”

“You must reach out both hands, then, Robert, with a warm, earnest heart behind them. It is hard work and slow work to climb, clogged as poor Mike is.”

We sat quite still a few minutes, looking into the fire. Afterwards he said as nearly like this as I can remember, —

“Now, Robert, if we are really going to begin in earnest, let us look over the ground a little, and understand all the bearings of the case. To begin with, poor Mike is not handsome, or prepossessing in appearance. We accept that as a fixed fact, but a fact which does not affect the boy mentally or morally. Then his words and ways are rude, vulgar, and uncouth; granted, but Mrs. Rooney's shanty is not just the place for polite culture. Go to his home some day, Robert,

I request this of you, and then go back to your mother and sisters, and thank, not yourself, but the Lord. Find your way to the boy's heart. I cannot think of any better direction to give than the Golden Rule; imagine yourself in his position, and be as kind and forbearing as you would like others to be with you. You must not be angry with me if I speak plainly to you, my dear Robert — *don't patronize him*; you can reach him easier without stilts than with."

I could not help laughing at that, but I am afraid I needed it.

"Another thing, Robert, I heard you speak of him to Charlie Elliott, the other day, as 'the paddy.' Are you in the habit of speaking and thinking of him by that name?"

I owned that I was; I dare say that I have written it here twenty times.

"I wouldn't do that. I would not even speak of them as 'the Irish boys'; it does not tend to raise their self respect. They all have names, and they are as much entitled to them as you are to yours; any thing of this kind sets them apart by themselves, and I do not wish that.

"Then haven't you, my boy, since you first saw him, been looking for the worst side of him? Something like this: whenever you have seen any thing disagreeable or annoying, you have thought over it, 'turned up your nose,' as boys say, and said to yourself, 'What next, I wonder?'" and so you were looking for the 'next,' and when it came you were rather glad, in a way, because you had been looking for it."

I think Mr. Jones must have seen through me pretty thoroughly. I did not know before that I was so mean.

"Now let us turn this new leaf quite over. Suppose you begin to-morrow morning to look only for something good in poor Mike, and when you find it, put it down and report to me. I will receive your report any time out of school hours."

I promised to do so. It was time for me to go home; but I wanted to say something before I left him, I thought he must think so meanly of me. I had promised so much, and had so much zeal when it was first proposed, and I was the only one who had failed.

I stammered out something, I hardly know what.

Mr. Jones laid both hands on my shoulders and said, "There are hundreds of boys, yes, and men too (for the man is only the boy a little grown), who are only men of generous impulses, who lay out large tracts of the world work, and propose great things, but never do them. Take care for this, Robert, and watch yourself. *Make your generous impulses work themselves out in earnest deeds*, or they amount to nothing."

I thanked him, and I shall remember it, for I am afraid I have been just a boy of "generous impulses," yet I expected to make a man of *great deeds*. I am impatient for to-morrow, to turn over this new leaf for poor Mike.

CHAPTER V.

OCTOBER 19. — NOON. Mike was not at school this morning. Yesterday I should have been only glad to be rid of him; but to-day I have been so uneasy I could scarcely think of any thing else. What if I have pushed him back till he has given up and gone down? If he is not at school this afternoon, I shall ask Mr. Jones if I had not better go down there after school. I can ride almost there with Al Barton, so that I should not be very late home.

EVENING. I have been to see Mike. But I will put things down in order. When I spoke to Mr. Jones about it, he looked pleased, and said, —

“Yes, by all means. Will you take Charlie with you?”

“Not this time, sir,” I said. “I think I had better go alone.”

"I am glad of it," he said.

When I turned to go away, he called me back with, "And Robert" —

"Well, sir?" for he stopped till Harry Anderson had left the desk.

"Nothing — only be sure to leave your stilts at home," he said, smiling.

"I will try to lose them, I think," I answered, smiling back; and, receiving a kind message for Mike, I started.

I left Al at the crossing, only a few rods from "Young Ireland," as they call it. Then I did "shake in my shoes" a little. I had never been there except to ride through with father. What a filthy, forlorn place it is! I wondered which of those nine miserable shanties pretty Jamie Barnes could have come from. At last I settled upon one where there was a clean curtain at the window, and a few pots of plants; but I don't know whether I guessed right. Mr. Jones had given me particular directions how to find Rooney's, but I don't think I could have made any mistake, for there, outside the door, were four or five boys, all curiously like Mike, yet different



"He was lying on some old clothes on the floor." Page 69.

from him. Owen knew me, so I addressed myself to him, —

“Is Mike sick?” I asked, “I missed him from school to-day; you know we sit together.”

“Who’s out there, Ow’n?” some one called from within. “Can’t ye hold yer clatter?”

“Who’s there, mother?”

This was Mike’s voice; and I could see, through the open door, that he was lying on some old clothes, on the floor, in the corner; so I walked in. Mr. Rooney was not there, and I drew a long breath. I thought I could get along with the rest. I walked straight up to Mike, and held out my hand, but he only stared at me in stupid wonder. I didn’t mean to stop half way, so I said, —

“I didn’t know you were sick, Mike, but I missed you from school, and you have been so regular I thought there must be something the matter.”

“I’ve been ivery day,” he said; “I thought mebby I could larn.”

He looked so hopeless and sad when he said it, I could almost have cried. “And you are learning,” I answered. “I am sure you read a great deal better than you did.”

He looked so pleased. "Do I, now?"

"And Mr. Jones says you will make a first-rate writer."

He raised himself on his elbow, "Did the mather say that same hisself now, for thrue?"

I assured him that he did, and the bright color came up into his face, so that he did not look ugly at all.

"But the 'rithmetic," he said with a sigh, lying down again, "that bothers me sore."

"But you will like it after a while; only dig away at it, and I will help you all I can."

"Sure, and it's meself that's willin'," he said, "I did want to know somethin'."

"And you shall," I answered heartily.

He looked at me again, his great round eyes full of wonder.

"Will you be at school to-morrow," I asked.

"Mebby; I took the chill the day be rason o' the damp; but mother gin' the stuff to me, and I'll be betther 'gin the morra."

I told him every thing that I could think of that would interest him that had happened

at school. It did him so much good! Sometimes he laughed fit to shake the old shanty down, and the boys crowded in the doorway. I could hardly believe he was the same Mike Rooney that I had edged as far away from as possible in the seat at school. Yet he was the very same, and dirtier than when he comes to school, and in the filthiest place I ever saw. His mother, a large, red-faced, pock-marked woman, was flying in and out as if she were possessed, blarneying sometimes me and sometimes Mike, her "poor jewel, mavourneen," and then scolding the boys outside fit to deafen one. Mike took it all very coolly. I suppose he is used to it. When I arose to go, Mike said, —

"Ye's very good, but " —

"But what, Mike?"

He was cracking his knuckles. "Bean't ye come o' some arrant?"

"No; I came all the way on purpose to see you." His eyes grew very bright, but he did not take them off my face.

"And didn't the masther sind ye, thin, now for sure?"

"No, sir ; he didn't know that I was coming until I went and told him, and then he said that I must bring a message for him ; that he wanted to see you in your place again. Won't you believe me, Mike, that I came down here because I felt kindly towards you, and wanted to see you ? And I shall come again if you are sick and would like to have me."

Then there were two great tears came into his eyes. "Thin the Lord bless ye for a jewel," he said. "I'll niver say ye're proud agin, an' it's meself that'll fight any spalpeen that says so. I did say it," he said, speaking lower, and hanging his head, "but I s'pose 'twas yer way, an' I didn't know."

I knew I could come away leaving him to think he had only misunderstood "my way" ; but I meant to do the square thing now : so I said honestly, laughing, "That same was thrue for you, Mike, if you did, and you might have said 'surly' too ; but I mean to do better now ; let's shake hands on it."

He looked at me a minute, and then took my hand and shook it with a will. And then he thanked me over and over again, with all

his heart in his face, till he grew almost handsome.

He was certainly very grateful for such a little kindness, so I can put that down in my report. And he was sharp too, and independent; for he was not going to thank me much until he was sure I came of my own accord and on purpose. He was *ready to acknowledge himself in the wrong* too, which is always such a hard thing for me to do. Why, Mike isn't so bad, after all! Now I can tell mother and Katie all about "my boy." I have avoided it, and have been uneasy all the time in the house, and cross too, I am afraid, for fear they would say something about it.

OCTOBER 21. Mike hasn't been to school yet. He had "the chill the morra, an' the faver sin'." Last night I told "Ow'n" to ask Mike if I might come again; to tell him he was such an independent fellow that I was afraid to come unless he wanted to see me. So I went to-night, sure of a welcome, taking with me, from mother and Katie, a glass of jelly and some buns.

Katie would have cried to see how he had

tried to make the place look a little more decent, poor fellow. There was a little place around his corner swept; the old clothes he laid on were folded the best side out; the only chair was by his side waiting for me, and Mike's face and hands were clean, though the ragged, dirty jacket—he does not wear his school clothes at home—looked rather worse by contrast.

He was so glad to see me, I staid a long time. I had found out from Barney McCarthy where the lessons were in his "'rithmetic," and I helped him through the three he had missed. He says he "sees clare thro' 'em intirely now." It was not much trouble, either. I thought he was so dull and stupid at school, but he wasn't now. I wonder if Mr. Jones would say the difference was in me? that it was the "heart behind the hands"?

By the way, Mr. Jones has never said any thing to me about him since I went there. It is a little odd, I think. He has not forgotten him by any means, for he has been to see him too.

Mike's seat and desk are all nice and

clean now, and I have washed his slate, and put his few books in order, and put the ball, the pretty red-and-black one, and a new bat with his initials on it, in the desk, ready for him.

I hope he will try to be neater; but I think I can be patient now. I do like, though, to have every thing nice and clean around me. But I don't know how much of that I may owe to my mother. If Mrs. Shane Rooney had brought me up, and mother had brought up Mike, I can't tell exactly how it might have been.

I am quite impatient to have him in school again. He thought he could come Monday, and I have asked Al Barton to give him a ride. Mike doesn't know that, though.

OCTOBER 25. Mike was at school to-day. He seemed bewildered and uncomfortable in Mr. Barton's handsome carriage. I know he would rather have walked if he had been able; but he looks very pale. I was glad I happened to be at the door when he came.

I don't think Al had been very gracious during the ride, and I heard him say to Harry Anderson, at the gate, that he had brought

"Rob's paddy." I felt myself growing hot and angry, but what could I say? He had learned it of me, and he certainly could not know how unkind and disagreeable it sounded to me now. I don't think Mike heard it; for Barney called to him at the same time; and Al's patronizing airs—how bad they do look when I see them fairly in other boys!—had made Mike rather bewildered and stupid. His eyes had their old white, dull look; but when he looked beyond Al and Harry, and saw me coming to meet him, it made me happy to see how his face brightened.

We went in together, and Charlie Elliott came over, in his easy, handsome way, to greet us both. And then Mr. Jones came for a kind word or two with Mike, and gave me a keen look of such pleasant understanding that I am sure we were two very happy boys when we took our seats.

How pleased he was with his bat and ball! I had put them where he would not find them until recess. I could hardly make him comprehend that they were really for him. He puzzled a long time over the "M. R."

"What's they stan' fur? An' a'n't they for meself at all, at all?" he said at last.

I laughed, and said, —

"'M. R.' is for Michael Rooney; 'thru' for you, Mike; I made it 'meself intirely.' Now come!"

But he didn't come right away; he held them softly, one in each hand, looking from one to the other, his face growing redder and redder; he raised his eyes slowly to mine, and then down his head went, on to his desk, and he was crying like a great baby.

"Why, Mike!" I said, for I didn't just know what to say.

"I wish I never 'ud said ye wor proud an' stiff-like," he sobbed out; "it troubles me sore."

"And I wish with all my heart I never had said you were a lumbering paddy, Mike: so we are even."

But now, when I come to think of it, I don't believe we are quite even; for I am afraid the unkind things I say of people sometimes don't "trouble me sore." And he has been so careful all day not to annoy

me in any of the ways I used to be so savage about, and not to soil the clean desk and floor. Once, when he was puzzling over a hard question, he spat upon the floor, as he used to do so much ; but he was down on his knees in an instant, wiping it up with a piece of waste paper he had brought wrapped around his arithmetic, looking sideways at me. I smiled and nodded pleasantly when I caught his eye, and then we both went on with our lessons. He studied like a hero, and I was perfect in all my recitations: altogether, it has been a very pleasant day, and I have felt warmer and happier every time I have caught a glimpse of the bushy yellow head beside me.

OCTOBER 26. Father is coming home for a short furlough. "Only for a few days," he writes; but he can come now as well as not, and doesn't know when he can come again. It seems almost too good to be true, only it will be so short; and I have so much to tell him and ask him about. And my "story"—what will he think of it? I had quite forgotten, lately, that any one was ever to see

it. I am sure I could not bear any one to but father. And then, too, I am to begin to be a Christian while father is home. I didn't think it would be so soon!

CHAPTER VI.

NOVEMBER 3. Father has come and gone. Only a week! and I am sure there never was so short a week! We miss him almost more than ever.

One day he had to ride over to Thornton. I thought he would ask me to go with him, — it was too cold and unpleasant for the girls, — but he came to me and said, —

“I was going to take you with me, Robert; but where is the ‘story’? Shall I take that instead? I don’t know when I shall have another time to give it the careful attention I would like. Which shall go?”

I was well pleased, for he had said nothing about it before, and I was almost afraid he had forgotten it. I was quite nervous and excited when I put it into his hand. He turned the leaves a little, and, when he saw how much was written in it, he looked up with a smile and said, —

"It does not complain of neglect, certainly, and I think you must like it."

"Oh, I guess I do, first-rate!" I said. "I should be lonesome enough without it, now; but I am afraid you will think it a poor story."

"I will tell you what I think of it to-night," he said, with one of his earnest looks; "and whatever I shall have to say, my boy will remember that it is his father's judgment."

I knew that. If he should see a great deal that he could not praise, he would love just the same. At supper, mother asked him if he would go over to Mr. Dunham's with her, and he said,—

"Not this evening, Margie; I have another engagement. I am going to visit Robert."

So I made a nice fire, and made my room as attractive as possible, borrowing an easy-chair from the parlor in honor of the occasion.

Such a good talk we had! I believe if I should never see father again, I should think more of that evening than almost any other time of my life. He said that the book had proved, he believed, to be just what he

had hoped it would, — a faithful mirror where he could see his boy's inner life; that he hoped it would be always as frank and honest as if I were not intending it for any one else to read, only *thinking out*. He talked with me a good deal about my work for Mike; said that the trouble in the first place had been, that my resolutions were not deep enough; that if I could have seen away down in my heart, he thought I should have found that I felt willing to take it up because I thought something grand and sublime would come of it which would insure the boy's everlasting gratitude, and would perhaps make me a hero, a great benefactor in my own eyes and in the sight of my world; this was where selfishness came in. And then in the better part, the part that honestly sought to do good, I was reaching for the bright, shining end of the work, which lay a great way off, ten or fifteen years, perhaps, or possibly in eternity, and was drawing back from putting my hand to the rough, dark end nearest me, forgetting or shrinking from the patient care and effort which must come all the way to insure success.

"These are what we call carpet soldiers. Rob," he said; "and we never want them at the front."

He said he hoped that it had been and would be good discipline for me; that I would not forget the lesson; that because I was impulsive and enthusiastic, I must take the more earnest heed that I did not effervesce—he said, smiling—in only froth.

"I like the motto Mr. Jones gave you, 'Make your generous impulses work themselves out in earnest deeds.' I hope you will remember and act upon it. And I think you and I both, Robert, have much for which to thank this faithful friend. I tremble at the thought of the fearful thing from which you were kept,—the sin of letting go the soul which God has given into your care. I shall feel a deep interest in Mike. If he teaches my boy to deny himself, to continue patient in well-doing, you will owe him quite as much as he will you, won't you, Robert? I must make his acquaintance before I leave."

Then he drew me down on the arm of his chair, as I used to sit when I was a very

little boy, and told me how it had grieved him most to find in my story that it was so much harder for me to find my way to my heavenly Father's heart than to his, that I had determined to wait until he could carry me there.

"I cannot do it, Robert," he said very sadly; "God knows how gladly, how eagerly, I would if I could. But if you want to go anywhere in the street, God has given you feet to take you; so he has given you a soul born of God to take you back to him, and a Saviour to open the way. And, my dear boy, can I make this way through Jesus any plainer to you? Are you quite sure, Robert," he said very slowly, "that you want to go? that it is really the earnest desire of your heart, if I could open the way for you to-night, to be a Christian?"

I am sure I have thought it was. I have thought so for three months, — that I only wanted some one to help me. But when father asked me I saw all at once that I did not; that it seemed dull and solemn. I do want to some time, and know it is hardly safe to wait;

but if I were only sure that I could go on as I am for ten years or so, and then be a real, thorough Christian, like father, I would rather wait.

He kneeled down and prayed for me, — and I shall never, never forget how his voice trembled, — that God would hasten my lingering heart; that he would give me such an understanding of the precious Saviour that I would gladly run to his embrace. And so father has gone, and I am left just where I was before.

NOVEMBER 5. Winter has come in earnest; splendid skating and coasting. It has done poor Sib good already; she begins to look quite like her old self. Mike is doing nicely. I believe I am as much interested in his progress as in my own; and what a warm-hearted fellow he is!

Jamie Barnes's mother thought he could not come the long way to school through the winter; but Charlie Elliott said, with a look down into Jamie's eyes that made the little fellow perfectly happy, that he couldn't do without his little brother, and he wouldn't.

So Charlie has made an arrangement with the truckman, who comes up every morning, to bring him. I think Charlie paid him something, but he didn't tell Jamie so; and Mike said he would carry him home on his back when the snow was deep; so we are to keep our full number from down there, and we are all glad of it. I believe we are all better boys for having them with us.

NOVEMBER 30. What a long time it seems since I have written here! and now I must not write too long. I have been sick three weeks. I don't ever remember to have been sick before. When I am well and strong again, it seems to me I shall never forget to be thankful for it.

Poor Henry Rhoades! I have been to see him sometimes, and thought he was not very much to be pitied if he did have to lie or sit in the house all the time, when he has every thing around him as pleasant as it can be made. But oh! to lie all day, turning from one side to the other, counting every thing in the room over and over, till the trying to stop makes my head ache, wanting

a dozen things until I get them, and then thinking I should have liked any thing else better—I am ashamed to be so much trouble—taking bitter medicine often enough to keep the taste in my mouth all the time, till I am sure I can never bear the sight of a spoon again—oh, I know all about it now, and it is very hard.

They have all been very kind. Sibyl has trotted up and down stairs so patiently for all my whims. When she complains again, I don't think I shall act as I did last summer.

These clear, bright winter days I should so love to be out in the keen air, and I can hear the boys running and shouting on their way to school. They have been very thoughtful, all of them, and none of them, not even Charlie Elliott, kinder than my Mike. He has never missed a day in coming here, for all his long, two miles' walk through the snow, and he always finds something to do for me, or for mother and Katie. They all like him so much!

He says "school isn't fine at all, at all,

without Bob." He calls me "Bob" yet; he doesn't know how it used to vex me. I haven't cared this long time.

He said to me the other day, "Do ye know, Bob, if it hadn't been for ye're comin' down so swately to meself when I was sick, I should ha' jist gi'n up intirely? I was clean beat out; and yer grand ways—ye won't mind me spakin' of it now, Bobby, machree—jist upshot me, asthore. It was sorra throuble, for I didn't want to be a man like thim yondher, niver," and he pointed towards his home, "an' I won't."

And indeed he won't. Perhaps he will make a better man than I shall, after all the prayer and care I have had. Dear Mike! I can say it now with all my heart.

DECEMBER 7. There is one thing that troubled me: I am afraid things are not going right at the store. I do not hear much about it, for they try to be cheerful before me; but I see and hear enough to worry me. I know mother has so little money to use that she has to be just as economical as she can be. Father's partner says, "Hard times,

very hard ; we shall all have to retrench." And he has just bought an expensive new carriage, while mother and Katie have to plan every way to make both ends meet. They think I don't see, but I do. Mother sent down to the store a week ago to ask Mr. Dunham to call here ; but he "had an engagement ; he was very sorry ; would come up very soon ;" but he has not been here yet. Uncle Macey came here this morning, and he and mother had a long talk in the parlor ; if there is any thing that he can do, it will be done. But father always thought so much of Mr. Dunham ; perhaps I am mistaken, after all.

I am quite well again. Mother says I may commence school Monday. I am quite impatient. I have been out a whole month.

DECEMBER 13. Mr. Dunham has run away ! There is a great deal of excitement ; they say he owes almost every one in town. Uncle Macey is at the store, trying to find how matters stand. Mother cautioned Sib and me, this morning, not to talk about it at school. It was well she did, for the boys all came to

me at recess, and asked me about forty questions, and if it had not been for what mother said, I suppose I should have told all I knew, and more too. Mother does not talk much about it herself; she says, "We will wait and see." I said so many times, "What shall we do? oh, if father were only here!" that to-night she said, —

"Our heavenly Father is, dear Robert; and is this little affair of ours too much for him, do you think? Besides, since your father is not here in person, suppose we try to think, and lay out just what he would like us to do in his absence. First, I think that he would say that we were to trust uncle Macey to do the very best that could be done under the circumstances; don't you think so?"

"Yes! I know father has perfect confidence in uncle Macey's judgment, and he will do just as if it were his own."

"Then I think he would say that we must not worry and be troubled, for God had given all these comforts once, and he can give them again if he thinks it is best for us to have them."

"But, mother," I said, "it isn't God's taking; it is Mr. Dunham's."

"But God rules, God over all, blessed forever!" she said reverently.

Then I ventured to ask — what I had been thinking of all day — "if she thought we should be very poor."

"Poor? No!" she said, smiling brightly; "not while we have health, and strength, and each other, and this blessed God over all."

"But it does seem too bad," I said, "for us to have to scrimp and pinch, and that scamp" — I am afraid I said it with a good deal of fire, for mother laid her hand over my mouth for a moment — "for him, I say, to settle down somewhere out of reach, and live at his ease."

"At his ease? O Robert, never, never that! Would you or I change places with him to-day? This is scarcely trouble, my Robert," she said, looking down into my eyes, "but if the day should ever come when my boy's eyes cannot honestly meet mine, when he turns away from his mother's gaze, lest she should read the guilt of his heart in his face, then God help me."

I threw my arms around her neck and kissed her. After a while she said, —

“Robbie, you was fierce, almost, when you spoke of Mr. Dunham just now. I suppose he has taken nearly our all; but you have not thought of the fearful price he pays for it. I have been thinking of it to-night, till it has taken all the bitterness out of my heart, and I pity him. Think of it, Robert; in one little night to leave behind him family, honor, self-respect, an honest life among old friends, even the name which belonged to the old upright life, for he dared not take even that with him, — only the little money, and the heavy weight of guilt in his heart, and the dread of discovery which will follow him everywhere. O Robert! it is he that is poor, not we. God’s ways *are* just.”

I am glad mother made me see it in this way, I felt so bitter and hateful this noon.

DECEMBER 14. These days of waiting till we know just where we stand are so trying! Mother bears it so much better than the rest of us; even Katie seems to make a great effort to be cheerful. This morning we, Katie

and I, took a little walk together, and encouraged each other; it did us both good. But what should we do without our bright, brave mother? To-night, after Nannie had gone to bed, she said cheerily, —

“There is one certainty that we can rest upon, — that we shall need to retrench wherever we can; if there are any leakages, now is the time to stop them. Suppose we each set our wits to work to examine into these possibilities and practicabilities of economy. I think I will appoint myself chairman of the committee, and I will receive your reports, — let me see, this is Tuesday, shall we say Friday evening?”

We all agreed; and Katie said, laughing, “But we shall expect a report from the chair too.”

“I don’t think that is quite in order,” mother said, “but I will try to do my part.”

I like this idea. I have half a dozen plans in my head already. I think, if mother is willing, I will sell all my best clothes; they ought to bring a good deal of money. Perhaps Frank Moore would buy them; they

would fit him nicely. My school clothes will do very well, and every one will understand, then, that I am in earnest, and haven't any false pride. Perhaps I had better not speak to Frank, though, until after I have presented my report, and consulted with mother. Then perhaps it would be as well for me to leave school now. I am nearly fifteen, and perhaps I can get a situation as clerk in one of the stores or offices ; or perhaps I might get an agency. I believe, after all, that is the best idea. Some of the advertisements say that \$150 can be made in a week. At that rate I could support the family until father comes back, and then go on with my studies. Perhaps uncle Macey would recommend me ; I am not very sure, though, that he would not laugh, and treat it as a good joke ; he hasn't much faith in such advertisements. I dare say I shall think of other ways too, before Friday night. Why, I don't believe it is going to be very bad, after all. We had a letter from father last night ; he was well and in good spirits ; he doesn't know any thing of the trouble at home yet.

Mother went to see Mrs. Dunham to-day. They have always been quite intimate, and mother could not bear that she should think that any reproach would fall on her.

Poor woman! She shuts herself up, and had seen no one until mother called. I don't believe she would have seen her if she had not been thoughtful enough to send a kind note in advance of her visit. Mother staid a long time, and came home looking sadder than she has over our part of the affair. She did not ask Mrs. Dunham any questions, of course; but uncle Macey says he thinks she doesn't know any thing more about her husband than we do. And they always seemed such a happy family! This is dreadful!

CHAPTER VII.

DECEMBER 16. I do wonder what Sib is doing! She asked mother if she might stay in her room all by herself this week, when she was not in school; and she keeps the door locked. Katie knows, for Sib comes out once in a while and asks her if she will "please come in a few minutes"; but she makes as much of a secret of it as Sib does.

Mike is coming into the village, into Mr. Westlake's office: he is as happy as if he had fallen heir to a fortune. He had heard that Mr. Westlake wanted a boy, and told me, privately, that of all things he should like that best. I asked him if he were going to apply for the situation, and he stared at me till his eyes grew perfectly round; then he reddened with anger, and at last the great tears came into his eyes.

"An' is it makin' fun of me ye'd be afther?"

Asthore, an' I didn't think that o' ye now, Bob. Shure an' it's meself that knows the handsome nice gintleman wouldn't want the likes o' me, 'a lumberin' paddy,' botherin' round."

Mike is learning to talk more correctly in school; but when he is excited he always falls back into his Irish ways.

"Will you never forget that, Mike?" I said. "If you are too proud or afraid to go to him, perhaps the 'handsome nice gintleman' will be coming or sending for you."

I kept thinking of it. It was just the place for Mike, and he must have it; but he never would get it for himself, and all my good wishes wouldn't help him much. Here was a place, now, for my impulse to be worked out in deeds. And so, without saying any thing more to Mike, or waiting for my courage to give out, I rushed down to Mr. Westlake's office as fast as I could go. I did not know him much, but he is a friend of father's. Father always spoke of him in the highest terms. I remember his saying once that he was a "warm-hearted Christian, ready for any good work."

He had a large law-book before him, and papers with very black writing scattered all over the table. He said good-morning, though, as politely as if I were a rich client, and offered me a seat. As I am only a boy, a good many gentlemen would have only stared with the look which says so plainly, "Well, what did you come for? tell your errand quick, and get out of the way." If ever I get to be a man, I mean to remember that I was a boy myself once. I will charge my memory with this, for I think a great many men do forget it. But this is what Mr. Jones calls a digression.

I hadn't fixed at all what I was going to say; but Mr. Westlake asked me a good many questions about father and about my school. He did not seem at all curious about my business, but as if it were the most ordinary thing in the world for me to call upon him, till I felt quite easy; then I told him my errand. He asked several questions, then said with a smile, that he should hardly have thought of going to that neighborhood for his assistant, but a good many real diamonds

have been digged out of darker places than that.

"Is he smart and quick?" he asked.

"I don't know as you would think him very quick, sir; but I know he is honest and faithful, and we think at school he is real smart."

"Faithful!" he said thoughtfully. "Do you know, my boy, it is saying a great deal for your friend to say that? If that can be truly said of man or boy, it is enough—it comprises *every thing*."

Finally he said,—

"You may tell him to come here after school to-night; I am quite favorably disposed towards him. He seems to have enough in him to win a good friend," he said with a kind smile.

"I am sure Mr. Jones would recommend him too, if you should ask him," I said.

"I will take your word for it."

I thanked him, and got up to go. Mr. Westlake rose too; and as he stood before me, so handsome and graceful, poor Mike's bushy, yellow head and freckled face came before me all at once; I remembered how he

looked to me at first, and I felt my hopes all going out, and stood hesitating, with my hand on the door.

"Well, so there is something else, is there?" he said, his keen eyes reading my face.

"Nothing," I stammered, "only poor Mike — he — isn't a bit — pretty."

Mr. Westlake laughed out merrily.

"Why, what a terrible misfortune! I wonder that you dared to think he could make a man without such a necessary qualification."

"But I am afraid you will think him really ugly and disagreeable looking."

"And you would like to feel assured, before you go, that I will put on your spectacles, and see the honest, faithful boy behind the plain, unpromising face? Good! I will. Now are you satisfied?"

I thanked him with all my heart, and he shook hands with me at the door, and invited me to call again.

When I went to school, I told Mike, as coolly as I could, that Mr. Westlake would like to see him at his office right away after school. It took some time to convince him

that it was "thru, and no jokin'." He fairly trembled when he started for the office. I could hardly wait, myself, the half-hour till he came in with a bound at our back door, his eyes shining and his cheeks as red as Nannie's.

"The Lord bless ye, Bobbie, me jewel," he said, "he's gone an' done it, he has."

"Done what?"

"Took me shure, bless his han'some face, an' thanks to yees!"

So Mike is coming to his new home Friday; he is to do the work and errands about the office. Mr. Westlake has engaged to board and clothe and school him for six months on trial; then, if he is satisfied with him, he will make some permanent arrangement. I am so glad for Mike. Mother says he could not have a better place.

DECEMBER 17. To-night is the meeting of our "Committee on Ways and Means," as we call it. Mother prayed this morning that God would direct the thoughts of our hearts and the work of our hands.

I have not thought of any thing more, my head was so full of Mike all day yester-

day. Sibyl is so mysteriously busy that not even coaxing can coax her from her room. Perhaps I could get copying to do for Mr. Harris, but I don't like him. It would be pleasant to do it for Mr. Westlake, but his new boy will soon be able to copy for him; he seems to have a natural genius for writing. Uncle Macey says very little about the result of his investigation yet.

EVENING. Katie placed the chair for mother, and arranged the lights with a great flourish. Mother called the meeting to order, and made a few pleasant, business-like remarks. Then she called for the reports, beginning, of course, with Katie. Katie said she had not hit upon any great retrenchments we could make; only a good many little ones. She thought, if mother was willing, we might dispense with the parlor fire, except upon special occasions, now that wood is so high. We should not have any visitors that would not be quite satisfied in our pleasant family room.

I was mischievous enough to say in a loud whisper, "Now that Richard is not here."

Katie blushed, and mother called, "Order."

Katie went on, "And I was at Mrs. Harris's the other day, and she is looking for a good girl. Now, mother, why not let Ann go, and do the work ourselves, with Mrs. Bean to do the washing? This is not all *my* plan, though; Sibyl and I have arranged the work between us, with Rob to help some, perhaps, and mother to oversee; I am sure we shall get along nicely. Then I shall turn my old cloak, and wear that this winter instead of buying the new shawl we looked at last week. And we will knit all our winter stockings, and not neglect the soldiers, either. Aunt Mary says she will furnish all the yarn we want, and it will keep our fingers busy these long evenings. I don't think I shall need any thing new this winter. I believe this is all I can tell; but I think there are a good many expenses about our table that can be reduced a good deal when we have it all in our own hands."

Mother gave Katie a beaming look, but said she would hear all the reports before we took any action on them.

Mine was called for next ; but my plans looked so foolish and airy beside Katie's sensible, practical ones, that I scarcely wanted to tell them at all. But they were waiting, so I begged that Sibyl would give hers first ; I did not feel quite ready. Sib blushed, and looked as shy as if it had been really a public meeting. I had been wondering all the while what could be in that bundle in her lap.

"It will not help much, mamma," she said, "but you know you said I must have a pair of new gaiters, and shoes cost so much that I have mended my old ones at the side and bound them over, so that they look nicely, and will do all winter for my best shoes. And you said you must get me two new white aprons, mine were all so worn ; so I have taken that white brilliant skirt Miss Haines gave me for doll-clothes, — it wasn't worn at all, except at the bottom, — and cut three aprons. I tried so hard to get them all finished before to-night, but I couldn't quite ; I shall to-morrow, I think. It isn't much, mamma," she said, her lips quivering

a little, "but it is all I could think of: maybe you can tell me 'of something else."

Mother put her arm around her and kissed her, and her own eyes were full of tears. "My dear little girl, it is a great deal for you. It is in just such little things, dear, that we all expect to accomplish our great saving."

And she examined the neatly mended shoes and the pretty white aprons trimmed with stripes like Katie's last summer dress.

I was mean enough to say, and I will put it right down here where I can see it, that I wondered how much of this work was Katie's.

"Not a bit of it," Katie said. "I showed her how to cut the aprons, and gave her the trimming to save her the trouble of ruffling, but the plan and work are all her own."

"And now, Robert," mother said with a kind smile, "sha'n't we have yours?"

I hesitated a moment, and then said honestly, that I was afraid mine were not worth telling, and I did not much think now that she would approve of them. And I told of

selling my clothes, and leaving school to take an agency for selling patent clothes-lines, or pictures, or some of those things where they make so much money, the newspapers say.

I said I thought I could earn so much in a little while that we should not have to scrimp and save in these little stingy ways.

Katie's head was bent low over her work while I was telling my plans. I was a little vexed; for I half thought she was smiling—I don't know, though. When she raised her head, she looked serious and interested.

“Your plans, Robbie,” mother said kindly, “seem to be rather more in the way of business than ours—more for making money than economizing in the use of it. Perhaps we may need to take that into consideration by and by; if we should, I am sure you would be willing to do your share. But about selling any of your clothes. They were bought, you know, when cloth was cheaper than it is now; and as we hope you will live to wear out a good many suits, it would scarcely be economy, would it, to sell these, and then have to buy poorer cloth at a much higher price?”

I could see that plainly enough.

"Then your education will, perhaps, be all your capital: so you cannot afford to squander or stint it. You must get all you can, moral, intellectual, and physical. You cannot afford to give up these advantages unless circumstances should make it impossible for you to have them."

I could see that too, and it gave me a stronger motive for study, now that I could feel it a part of the plan of economy.

"And for Katie's and Sibyl's plans," mother said smiling, "perhaps they may be a little more stringent than is really necessary; but I do not believe they will hurt any of us; and I think we will adopt them, for this winter at least, with a little recast of parts; for mother must have a more generous share than just 'overseeing.' Mrs. Harris's will be a good place for Ann, and I am sure our work cannot be very formidable to such willing hands."

And so our meeting closed; but I don't feel exactly satisfied, at least with my part of it.

DECEMBER 18. Well, we know it all now. It is well that mother prepared us for the worst — no, this is not quite the worst, for mother had thought that perhaps it might be necessary to give up our home. Uncle Macey says it will not. He has written twice to father, but has received no answer yet. Unless he hears something to the contrary from him, uncle Macey thinks it will be best to continue the business for the benefit of the creditors, until the stock is closed out; and in this way he thinks every debt can be paid this winter; and for the future, father will make such arrangements as he thinks best.

Well, it is something to know just where we stand; and it is a great deal, as mother says, to know that we can be clear from debt, and shall still have our own dear home. But we shall have only father's pay to live on, and nearly all he had sent before was in Mr. Dunham's hands, and went with the rest. If we could only hear from father, and have his sympathy and advice, it would be such a

comfort to mother and to us all. But uncle Macey gives his whole time and attention to the business, and has done all that could be done. He is very kind.

CHAPTER VIII.

DECEMBER 20. Ann has gone, and mother and Katie and Sibyl have divided up her work among them; I don't have much more to do than I had before, though.

It is almost Christmas. Last year we all had so many nice presents — this winter mother says we will have to make up in kind words and deeds what we lack in gifts. I don't care for the presents, I am sure, though we all enjoy them when we have them; but it does seem rather a dreary *holiday* season.

We have looked for a letter from father every day for a week; and the last we had had been so long on the way that it did not seem new. And poor Katie hasn't heard from Richard in four weeks; I dread meeting her eyes every time I come from the office, she looks so eager and so disappointed.

How I do wish I had some money! It is miserable to be poor at Christmas. I am making a pair of brackets for Katie, I know she will like them; and Mike is helping me to make some pretty bookshelves for mother's room; but I want something for Sibyl and Nan, and Mike too, and what can I do without money? Last year father gave me ten dollars to buy my Christmas presents, and now I have but fifty cents to my name. I told Mike to-day that that was worse than nothing, and he said he was "rale sorra for me, because it was worse nor if I'd niver had it, like him," and I guess it is.

DECEMBER 21. Mrs. Hartley called here to-day. The ladies are making up money to buy a handsome dressing-gown for a Christmas present for Mr. Dennison. They had contributed two dollars each, and she called for mother's contribution. Mother's face grew a little paler, and her eyes fell at first, as she listened. My heart ached and my cheeks burned. I don't believe she has as much as that in the house. Katie watched her too, with sad, loving eyes which were fast filling

with tears, but Mrs. Hartley did not see her. It was the first time, I am sure, that mother ever had to deny herself the pleasure of *giving*—and she loves Mr. Dennison so much, and feels so grateful for his constant remembrance of us since father left. I felt mortified, and hoped she would make some excuse. I did not think it at all necessary that the lady should know that she *could not give*; and I waited impatiently to hear what mother would say.

She folded the paper quietly, and the color came up into her cheeks as she said in her pretty, lady-like way, —

“I am very sorry, Mrs. Hartley, that I cannot share your pleasure this time.”

Her lips trembled a little in spite of her efforts, and I know Mrs. Hartley loved and respected her a great deal more for telling the truth. After she had gone, Katie went to the window, and I saw her tears fall fast. Mother saw it too, and at last she went to her, and, putting her arm around her, said,—

“Faint-hearted so soon, Katie darling?”

“But, mother, I know how much you

wanted to do your part, as you always have; and it was such a paltry sum, and we all love Mr. Dennison."

"Yes, dear, it would have been very pleasant to have been one of the givers; but, Katie, I do not believe our pastor will doubt our affection for him, if he misses my name. And after all, perhaps it was more our *pride* than our love, that was wounded."

Katie smiled a little through her tears, and said, "and, if *poverty* is to be our cross, *pride* will not help us to bear it."

"Don't call it a *cross*, Katie," mother said in gentle reproof, "we should be ashamed to call this light burden a *cross*."

Katie stood at the window still, looking thoughtfully out into the street.

"Mother," she said at last, "if you have no objections, I will call to Mrs. Hartley when she comes back, and ask her to let me make the dressing-gown on our machine. She said they intended to hire it made; and it would cost three or four dollars. I can give my *work*, and I should like to do it."

"I had thought of this, dear, but I did not know as you would like it."

Of course Mrs. Hartley was pleased with the offer. And Katie will quilt and stitch it beautifully, and with all her heart. But I didn't like the arrangement at all. Now everybody will know that mother didn't give money because she hadn't it to give. I didn't say any thing, but it *cuts* me.

DECEMBER 22. I was passing Mr. Westlake's office this morning, and he invited me to come in. Mike was out. He said he wanted to tell me that thus far he had found my friend perfectly satisfactory; that he thought and hoped he had brain and soul enough to make a worthy man, and he should be glad to help him on his way. He thanked me too for recommending him, and asked me if I had any other *protégé* that would like a little job of work; he had copying to be done, and Mike could scarcely write well enough yet; if I knew of any boy that could write clearly and accurately, he would like to engage him.

I asked eagerly how much there was, and he showed me the sheets. I looked them over, and thought I could do it in four hours:

I could take half an hour in the morning, half an hour at noon, and an hour after school, and finish it all to-morrow. I dreaded to ask him, for fear he might not want to trust me; but when I did, he did not hesitate, or look at all surprised, but engaged me at once. I wonder if he could have known how much I wanted the money.

Now I shall finish this the day before Christmas, and mother will help me divide it the best way.

DECEMBER 24. I have finished my work, and Mr. Westlake said I had done it very neatly, and paid me *a dollar*. I had not thought it worth more than half that. So I have my Christmas presents all here on my table, ready to be sent to their destinations. Last year they were a great deal more expensive, but I don't think I enjoyed them half as much,—I have worked so hard for these. Katie's brackets are beautiful, and she has wanted some this long time; and mother's shelves are prettier than any I have seen. Half the work on them is Mike's (he has spent every minute of his spare time on

them, I was so afraid I should not have them finished soon enough); but she will not prize them any the less for that. Then I have a pretty work-box for Sibyl, a large picture-book for Nan, and a pretty memorandum-book for Mike. And I *earned* them, except Nan's picture-book; that I bought with my fifty cents. I wanted something for Charlie Elliott, and mother said I might give him a book of travels that he asked me to lend him. Last Christmas I gave him a gold pencil; he always uses it.

CHRISTMAS. It has been a very pleasant day, though we have missed father. Uncle Macey came in his sleigh this afternoon, and took us all out to the farm for a Christmas dinner, but we had our Christmas presents at home first.

Last year I had thought so much about what I should have and what I would like; but this year I had been so busy, and knew there was so little to buy presents with, that I had not expected much, and after all I had exactly what I wanted,—a large double slate from mother (just what I have been wishing

for for six months), a zephyr scarf from Katie (a perfect beauty), and a pair of nice long, warm mittens from Sibyl (it must have taken her a long time to knit them, she is such a patient little thing), a handsome portfolio well filled from Charlie Elliott; and a tip-top gold pen and pencil from Mr. Westlake; he got them for Mike and me just alike; this was a great surprise. Mother got a copy of "Self-Help," plainly bound, for Mike. Father gave me one just before he went away. Mike was pleased enough with his presents, and so happy when mother thanked him, and praised his work on the shelves! And then, with the family party at aunt Mary's, it has been a very happy Christmas. I wonder how father spent it.

DECEMBER 28. No letter from father yet. It has been cold and stormy ever since Christmas. Nannie has been sick for two days, and taking care of her, and, ironing and baking and cooking and sewing, mother and Katie must be quite worn out. Even Sibyl seems to be on her feet from morning till night.

I said to Katie to-day that I thought they would need to get Ann or some other help. But she answered quickly, —

“O Rob! we could never pay her. We shall have a hard time to get through the winter, and save all we can. You know it is so long since we have had money from father, and it is so uncertain about coming. But you need not worry about me: it will not hurt me,” she said, with her sweet smile. “I am only afraid of mother’s over-working.”

I have been thinking a great deal about it since, and it seems to me they are all carrying some part of this heavy load, poverty, all but me, — the strong, healthy boy, “the only son”; and I am going on almost as I did when the money was plenty, and there was ease for all. I have been very blind and selfish. I want to talk with mother about it, and ask her to put something on my shoulders. I am sorry and ashamed. Even Sibyl looks worn and thoughtful, and in all this battle *I* am the only “carpet soldier.” Shall I ever grow to be

an unselfish, faithful, earnest man out of such a boy?

DECEMBER 30. I had no opportunity to talk with mother until to-night; but I *have* tried to help, doing every thing that I could see that needed to be done when I was in the house.

Nannie is no better. Katie and Sibyl went down to uncle Macey's to-night, and mother and I were alone, with Nannie asleep. So I told her how sorry I am, and how much I do want to do something now. She kissed me, and said, —

"I am very thankful, dear Rob, that you have been brought to see it yourself. We do indeed need to each bear our part, and we shall all love each other more and be happier for it. No: I will not point out your work to you: you will find it now. I think you needed, my boy, to have the *will* given to you. You will easily find a *way*, and will be better satisfied to find it yourself."

I think I looked a little doubtful, for she smiled brightly, and said, —

“If I gave you your part, I might give you too much or too little, you know; you shall judge for yourself.”

So I must be on the watch for the way to open for me to get into “active service.”

CHAPTER IX.

DECEMBER 31. Mother was right. It is easy enough to find a place to work, if one has really the will. Old Donald, who saws and splits our wood, came this noon for some money. Mother paid him, and oh! how fast our little stock dwindles down!

"It is quite a good bit of a price, ma'am," he said; "but every thing comes so high since the war begun."

"Yes; and we must all live," mother said pleasantly. "I expected it would be more than it used to be."

I had taken my resolution while they were talking.

"But you need not come any more, Donald," I said. "I am going to do it myself now."

Mother gave me a look which made me feel two inches taller.

"You might split the wood, Robert," she said; "but I am afraid you could hardly manage to both saw and split it."

"Yes, indeed I can," I said; "try me and see."

"Sure, and the boy's got the true grit in him," old Donald said, "and he's a fine, stout lad; it would be good exercise for him, if he has the mind."

Mother looked at me, and I knew what the clear, keen look meant,—whether this resolution could be trusted to wear, or whether it was only one of my splendid impulses. I don't know what she saw in my face, but she smiled, and her eyes filled too.

"Very well, Donald," she said, "I will employ the new man then. Perhaps he may need to call in your assistance sometimes. You have always done your work well."

"Thank ye, ma'am; and if ye need me, ye'll know where to find me."

After he had gone, mother put her hand on my shoulder, and said,—

"This is more than I expected of you, Robbie. It will help us a great deal; but

it will need courage, faith, and love to do it steadily and cheerfully all through this cold weather."

"I know it, mother," I said; "but I need to cultivate all these. See if I don't saw them all out of that great pile this winter, and split them into all the finer virtues for every-day use."

"God grant that you may, my dear boy! This is the way to look at all our work: this is what 'makes drudgery divine.' Then it is not mere sawing wood or washing dishes, but a part of our life-discipline and our contribution towards the home-comfort, adding to the blessings of those we love, or taking from their trials, and doing God service in the sphere where he has placed us. It can make any work fine and noble, if we think not so much of what we are doing as of what we are doing it for.

'Who sweeps a room as for thy laws
Makes that and the action fine.'

I went at once to the woodshed, full of mother's idea, and surveyed the stout logs, as Michael Angelo did his block of marble,

thinking of the beautiful growth of character which might be patiently worked out of them, and hoping that all the worthless dross in me might come out in the sawdust. It would be a good beginning for the new year, I thought.

I have sawed wood enough to know how, and it was just fun to take off my coat and pitch in. Old Donald had left the tools in fine order, and I worked for an hour, and then called mother and Katie to see what I had done. They were quite surprised to see what a great pile I had made.

Mother has helped me to lay out my work systematically. She says that an hour's work in the morning, and half an hour after school, will keep us going nicely, leaving old Donald's pile against an emergency. To accomplish this easily before school, she said we would all begin the day earlier and have an earlier breakfast. I have not felt so satisfied for weeks.

JANUARY 5. Nannie is getting quite well again. I am so busy, and the days are so short! But I enjoy the few minutes I have for skating and coasting ten times more for feeling

that I have fairly earned them. It does take a little pluck, though, these bitter cold mornings, to jump out of a warm bed before daylight, at mother's call, and kindle the fires, and then trudge off with my lantern to the woodshed. The rest are never much behind me, though; and I would not have mother find me looking cross over my saw for the world: it would hurt her so.

We got the long-looked-for letter from father to-day. He cheered us all he could. He said uncle Macey was doing just the best thing, and that we could manage to live pretty comfortably, he hoped, on his pay, until he came home. We must not think God had forgotten us, or dealt very sorely with us. He could trust him still, and he knew that mother and Katie could; and for dear Robert and Sibyl, if they should learn this best lesson out of this trial, he would bless God for it.

Over and over again he charged us all not to take it hardly, as if it were some great affliction. He was sorry that he could not be with us, that we might share it together; but it was all for the best: he was sure of it.

It has put a new courage into us all. But he wrote of having sent money two weeks before. We have never received it, and we shall soon be in sore need of it.

There have been prayer-meetings all this week. Mother or Katie have been every evening, and sometimes Sibyl. I went once because Katie wanted me to so much. But I have my lessons to get every evening, and then, if it is not too late, I like to write here. And I don't like to go to prayer-meeting anyway: that's the truth.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 9. The church was full as it could be to-day, and everybody seemed to feel so solemn! Mr. Jones has been sick: so there has been no school for several days, and I hadn't seen any of the boys since Wednesday. So I was very much astonished when Frank Moore came to me before Sunday-school, and told me that he believed that God had forgiven him for Jesus' sake, and given him a heart to love him; and now that he could not bear that any other boy should slight his Saviour as he had done. He said he had never known before how much Jesus

loved him, and now it made him happy all the time to think of it.

He did look happy, though the tears ran down his cheeks while he was talking, and I never saw him cry before. He begged me to think about it, and said that he had been praying for me and for Charlie, that we might all begin together to live for Christ.

I didn't know what to say to him, and I was glad that it was time then to go into Sunday-school.

Mr. Brady, our teacher, said he could scarcely confine himself to the lesson, his heart was so full of joy over one of his class, of longing for the rest.

"I asked this of my blessed Master," he said, "that he will give me all these, my five dear scholars, saved from sin, saved to Christ and holiness."

Frank left his seat with us, as if he were not thinking at all what he was doing, and stood close to Mr. Brady's side, his eyes shining through the tears. Mr. Brady threw his arm around him, and said, —

"I thank God that he has given me this

one, with the precious, positive assurance in my heart that I shall have them all, every one, to sit down with me in my Father's kingdom."

Frank looked and acted so differently all through the school! He has always been rather careless about his lessons, and Mr. Brady has often had to reprove him for not learning them at all. But to-day he was perfectly absorbed in it, and seemed to find so much more in the proof-texts than the rest of us. I could not help watching him.

One that came to him was John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." His cheeks glowed, as they always do when he is very much in earnest, and his lips quivered, and when he had finished, his eyes met Mr. Brady's, so full of meaning, as if only they two knew any thing about it. I think he had quite forgotten that there was any one else there.

At the close of the school Mr. Brady invited us all to come to his house an hour before

the meeting, to-morrow night. I don't believe I shall go, if I can find any excuse. I can't bear to.

JANUARY 10. I don't know whether to go to Mr. Brady's to-night or not. They talked so much about it at school this morning, and Frank wants us all to go.

Dorr Blakeslee makes all manner of fun of it, and talks in a way I can't bear to hear. He says Mr. Brady is so sure of all the class; but he reckons he will have a tough job of him. But his father isn't any better. I don't suppose Dorr would be in the Sunday-school at all if the superintendent weren't his uncle. So of course he will not be there.

But John Graham, the oldest boy in the class, is very serious, I think. He is not one of our set: he only comes to school to recite in two or three classes. I noticed him yesterday in the class, and to-day, and he seems to have something on his mind. He is a proud, pale, quiet fellow.

NINE O'CLOCK. I did go to Mr. Brady's. Charlie came for me. He said he did not care any thing about going, but Frank was

in such dead earnest about it, he thought we ought to go. There were only Frank and we two there; but Mr. Brady received a note from John Graham, which he read aloud. It was only, —

“My dear sir, I am very sorry that I cannot meet with you this evening; but, though I cannot be with you, Christ is with me, and I am humble and 'glad with the fulness of his presence.”

“Let us thank God,” Mr. Brady said; and we kneeled down, and he prayed.

Then Frank prayed too. I could scarcely believe my ears, and somehow it has made me feel real blue ever since. I did not think half so much about the meeting at the church. But Frank is *one of us*; and when he spoke to the Lord as if he *felt* every word he said, and was sure that it went straight to heaven, it made me feel as if Frank was a long, long way ahead of me. I could not help looking curiously at him afterwards. It seemed as if he would look different, — older and graver. But when he got up, he was just the same bright, modest-looking, curly-headed little fel-

low, not quite as tall as I. He is always rather timid and shy: he could scarcely have gotten up the courage to make so long a request of Mr. Jones; but when he prayed, he spoke quick and eagerly, as if he loved to. It was not much like my prayers.

It didn't affect Charlie a bit. He was just as cool; and when we were going to church, he laughed and joked as he always does. I tried to, but somehow I couldn't.

JANUARY 13. I believe there never was any one so wicked. Every thing goes wrong with me. I wish almost that Frank Moore and John Graham never had been converted. Before that, I was contented enough, and every thing was pleasant. I have been reading the Bible a good deal lately, and it seems a great deal plainer than it used to. God and Christ, and heaven and eternity, seem so much more real, and I feel it all so much more! And I cannot bear that God should see into my heart, and see how bad it is.

Frank says, "Only read, and see how good Jesus was, and he is yet," and I do; but the

more I see how good he is, the plainer I see how wicked I am ; and I wish, yes, I do wish that I could go away somewhere out of his sight.

CHAPTER X.

JANUARY 14. Dorr Blakeslee has become a Christian. I should as soon have believed it of Tom Haines, the worst man in town. He told it himself on the play-ground. I never saw such a change. He is the only boy in our school that ever swore very much, and he did swear fearfully: now he is so afraid that he shall, he begged of us all to help him remember, "that he might not grieve his Master."

I don't believe I shall go to the meetings any more; they do me no good, and what is the use? I thought I would walk home with Mike, and have a good talk about his prospects, and forget all that has made me so unhappy lately, but Mike seemed a little out of sorts or something; he didn't have any thing to say. I don't believe he noticed I was with him, only when I asked him some question.

I am going down to ask Charlie to go skating with me all to-morrow afternoon. We'll have a grand time. The ice is splendid. Charlie is a capital fellow. I have him left, anyway.

The boys have a prayer-meeting to-morrow afternoon at Mr. Brady's, and they will ask me; but I shall have this engagement with Charlie. I wish I could have something all the time, for I can't bear to be alone. I know as well as can be that mother and Katie are praying for me all the time, but it doesn't do any good. I tried to be better, but I believe I am only growing worse. I used to think that I wanted to be a Christian, but now I cannot anyway, if I did want to. I don't believe I want to, and I am sure I don't want to be bothered any more about it. I thought yesterday I would not read the Bible any more, only my chapter at night as I always have; but still I do read it more than any thing else, yet it only puts me farther away from God, and every thing holy and good. I wish it was to-morrow afternoon.

JANUARY 15. Charlie and I started early

with our skates. The ice was perfect, and the day pleasant enough, but we didn't have a good time at all; we quarrelled. I hardly know how it came about. Charlie said I was cross and unreasonable; he had better look at home, he was just as much to blame. I don't believe we have had the least difference before in two years. I am sorry he was so easily offended. We came home before sunset, scarcely speaking all the way. I sawed wood more than an hour. I was glad for something to do.

SUNDAY MORNING, JANUARY 16. Mike was here this morning before breakfast, and wanted to see me. It has come to Mike too — Mike Rooney, the poor Irish boy whom I was going to teach every thing almost! Mike, Dorr, everybody, can go into the kingdom but me. Oh, I am so miserable! This morning at prayers Katie read the fourteenth chapter of John. How beautiful it is! How sweet it must be to those who can feel that it belongs to them!

Mike says, "It is all just as aisy, and the Lord Jesus makes it all plain and sure." He has to him.

AFTERNOON. Oh, I have found him ! Mike's Saviour, Dorr's Saviour, mine, mine ! I went to church, though I would rather have staid at home. The text was, "And ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." Every word of the sermon seemed for me. Oh, I had thought that Jesus kept away from me, and it was I, a poor boy, who was trying to turn my back upon him. I saw it all so plain that I did not wait for the meeting to be out, but right there in my heart I gave up, and felt so relieved.

I didn't stay to Sabbath-school. I couldn't. I wanted to be alone with God ; all alone with my precious Saviour, to tell him all that was in my heart. I felt so afraid that it would all go away, that I should lose it, and be just back in my old bad way. And now I know that I could not be sure that I should hold fast, but that Jesus has promised to keep his own.

I have been reading again the chapter, that sweet promise I wished so much that I might call mine this morning. How long ago that seems ! it was all so dark then ! Now I must

go and tell dear mother and Katie my story. I know how they have felt for me.

JANUARY 17. It is with me yet. It was so sweet when I wakened this morning. I went to Charlie right away after breakfast, and told him why I was so cross and troublesome Saturday; what a heavy weight I had on my heart then, and how God had taken it all away; and I tried to ask him if Jesus was not calling him too, but he did not make me much of any answer to that.

He said, Nonsense; he hadn't laid up any thing against me; he saw I wasn't all right, and he guessed he wasn't any too amiable himself: so we could call it even, and forget all about it.

I did not feel satisfied, but I can pray for him. I have a Father in heaven, and a dear Saviour to pray to now; I know him and he knows me.

JANUARY 18. Charlie Elliott and Frank Moore and I have been good friends so long, all our studies and our plays have been enjoyed together; and now how can we leave Charlie out of this best part of all? Life seems so

different! We want to try to be and to do something for Christ, who has done so much for us.

Mr. Brady says, "Have faith in God; Charlie is the only one of our dear class now outside the fold."

Two months ago I should have thought, perhaps, that he would be the first to enter. But God's ways are not our ways: yet I do know that prayer for him will be answered in the Lord's good time.

What a strong, wise Christian Mr. Brady is! I have been brought up in all Christian influences, and yet I am like a baby in this new way. I do not know any more than Mike; it is the Spirit which teaches us, and I believe we all begin at the beginning.

JANUARY 19. No money from father yet. "Give us this day our daily bread" has a new meaning to us these days, for we are nearly out of every thing, and mother does not want to apply to uncle Macey unless she is obliged to, for he has done so much for us already. But I do not fret or worry as I did. God will take care of us, I know; we are all asking and trusting him.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 22. Mr. Westlake sent for me this morning to do some copying for him. I was so glad that mother was not in, so that I could surprise her. I worked at it this morning and afternoon, and when I had finished, he paid me seventy-five cents; and this is no trifle to us now. I was pleased enough when I brought it home and gave it to mother.

Mr. Westlake has engaged me to come for an hour every day next week, and is to pay me twelve shillings for it. I know God sent us this help, and I am very thankful. Mother and Katie are too, only they are afraid it will crowd my days too full of work. I am not a bit afraid of it. I don't think I ever was really lazy, and no work is very heavy when one feels comfortable at heart. I am sure my wood-pile has been a great good to me, — it has taught me patience and perseverance, and I look at it with real satisfaction.

I brought Katie four letters from Richard to-night; some of them had been a long time on the way. I ran all the way from the post-

office, I was so impatient for her to have them. She has kept up bravely all the time, but I know she has been very anxious, and my heart has ached for her. But it is all right; he is safe and well.

We are poor, it is true, but we are very happy. Sibyl, too, hopes that she is a Christian, — she is so quiet and shy, — it has been ever since she was sick last fall. So father's prayer is answered. God has been very good to us. A great many have learned to know him this winter, but Charlie is still outside.

JANUARY 23. Sunday again. The service of the day has seemed almost like a new thing to me. Mother said she knew I would find it so, because the Lord himself was in his holy temple now.

Charlie Elliott was not in Sunday-school to-day; all the rest of the class were, and I think we never had such an interesting lesson. It was upon the forty days that Jesus tarried with his disciples before the ascension, and it was just what I needed.

JANUARY 25. There has been a terrible battle, and father's regiment was in the very

thickest of the fight. We cannot hear any thing definite yet. Report says a good many of the officers were killed, and two of the regiments were all cut to pieces. We can only go to God for comfort,—it is such a blessed place to go to!—and for the rest, we go on about our work; we can find enough to keep us busy.

JANUARY 27. Father is reported among the seriously wounded. Uncle Macey is going to start to-night. He will bring father home if he can, and if not, he will telegraph for mother, and she will go on at once. We got the news early this morning, and after prayers mother and Katie went quietly to work to make every thing ready for father to come, or for mother to go. Sibyl and I went to school; we would rather have staid at home, but mother did not think it best. I felt glad to get home again. We did not talk much, but it seems a comfort to keep close together, and Jesus is very near our sad, waiting home.

JANUARY 28. This noon we received a telegram, "We leave in the 2.20 train." So they will be here to-morrow night, we think.

Thank God for this, that he is able to come home, was all we could think of at first. We all went to mother's room, and she read the twenty-third Psalm, and thanked our Father for the spared life. We do not speak, and dare not think, of how bad it may be, it is such a great comfort to know that we shall all be together.

JANUARY 31. Father has been with us two days now, and we have grown a little *used* to the certainty which shocked us so much at first, that he is *crippled for life*, for his right sleeve is empty. The arm is taken off at the shoulder.

Gratitude has come, even with this dreadful certainty, for the mercy which has spared his *life* and his health, as we hope. He is doing very well, and the surgeon thinks the wound will be entirely healed by spring. He is very cheerful, and says his cup of mercy is running over.

This morning he took my hand in his, and said, "Your letter, Robert, was the last thing I read before we went into the fight, and the great joy never quite left me through all that

terrible day. Even when I thought for a time that I should never see any of my darlings again, I could rest in the sweet hope that we should soon be united in heaven."

And this afternoon he said, "How you have grown, Robert! and mother has been telling me how nobly and cheerfully you have lightened her burdens. It is scarcely sad to think of growing old or crippled," he said to mother with a smile, "for Robert will be my good right arm, and a staff for our old age."

In a day or two, as soon as he is able, he says he wants to read my "story" from where he left it last fall.

FEBRUARY 1. It seems as if I could begin my little record of every day with "Thank God," for every day brings some new mercy; and father says this is true of the darkest day.

This morning two of our best and richest men called upon father to say that, as soon as he is able to resume business, they will supply him with any amount of capital that he needs. This generous offer takes away all care and anxiety for the future. Father will

not need even to think of business until he is strong again.

He has already made arrangements to recover his back pay. In the spring we will take down the shutters, and give the old store a new life.

FEBRUARY 6. May this Sabbath be to me always a day "marked with a white stone"! To-day I have taken the vows of God upon me, and have been received as a member of the church. It seems a very solemn thing, — almost too great a thing for boys and girls like us; but his strength is made perfect in weakness, and he has promised that his grace shall be sufficient.

I trembled at the thought that I may prove an unfaithful member, yet I do want to be enrolled before the world as "a soldier for Jesus"; and I know he will never lead where he cannot keep me.

May God help me to be so faithful and diligent and earnest, that from this time a better "story" of me shall be written in his book of remembrance!

ROB CLAXTON.

CHAPTER XI.

"COCHECO prints, eighteen cents! Merri-macs—no: let me see Sprague's. Father!" and the bustling young clerk turned to the gentleman at the desk.

If you had turned your attention with the boy's, you would have been loath to turn away again. It was an exceedingly fine face, yet one in which the soft, womanish eyes and sensitive mouth gave promise of the largest grace and patience with the excitable, impulsive clerk. The massive brow and the hand which supported it, a belle might have envied for their almost transparent delicacy,—the delicacy which tells of long confinement indoors. An involuntary contraction of the forehead, or momentary compression of the lip, told mutely of suffering and pain; and the empty sleeve was the only memorial of a strong right arm which had served faithfully his country in his country's need.

Alas that the sacrifice had been accepted so soon, that when her need grew greater, and her appeals more and more urgent, he must listen to her cries, loving her all the more because he had shed his blood for her, and feel that he had given all his strength while it was yet morning, and he had no more to give save his prayers!

Yet the effectual, fervent, agonizing prayers of the faithful were no mean offering, and it may be that in the struggle they won more victories than the sword; for many a valiant soldier went to the field clad in their unseen but impenetrable armor, and the smoke of their incense ceased not day nor night.

The necessary information was given, and again the clerk was absorbed and bewildered amid piles of "Cochecos," "Merrimacs," "Spragues," "Manchesters," and "Narragansetts."

There were quick steps at the back door, then a bushy yellow head and freckled face made its appearance.

"O Mike!" shouted the clerk, while the

gentleman looked up with a pleasant "Good-morning," "if you *could* only stop a little while, we are so busy! — all these goods to be marked and put up, and bills looked over, and barrels and boxes stowed away. I declare we — I am half crazed."

"Easy, Bob, easy," was the laughing rejoinder of the new-comer. And then, turning to the gentleman, he said, "That is just what I came for, captain—if I can help Robert. Mr. Westlake said I could have the day to myself. Perhaps you know our old copy, sir, —

‘Satan finds some mischief still
For idle hands to do,’

so I came to you to be kept out of mischief."

Robert sprang over the counter; and the merchant said, smiling, "Thank you, Mike. I don't think you are in much danger of that; but Rob has been wishing for you all the morning, and we shall be right glad of your assistance."

"That same is thrue for ye, me jewel," said Rob, clapping him on the shoulder.

Mike turned first to the merchant for

instruction, and then the work went systematically and briskly on. One shelf after another was filled with neatly arranged goods by Mike, after Robert had marked them.

"Troth and that's a beauty!" said Rob, smoothing a piece of soft blue cashmere, "and dirt chape too: ye'll niver find the like o' that for that same, Mike Rooney, and that's the truth."

"It is beautiful," said Mike with quiet admiration.

"Will some one tell me which of these boys claims Hibernian birth?" said Captain Claxton, smiling; "I am puzzled."

"You needn't be, sir," answered Mike; "it is always the land fowl makes the most spatter in the water."

"That's good, Mike, first-rate," exclaimed Rob with delighted appreciation, and again they gave their undivided attention to business.

The work that had so taxed the inexperienced clerk in its accumulation grew light and interesting under this pleasant division of labor, and there was much surprise expressed

when a little curly head peeped in at the door, its possessor announcing with much importance that she had come all the way by herself to walk home with papa; and dinner was all ready — most — when she started, and (this in a tone of confidence) they were going to have something real nice, but she wouldn't tell.

This set the boys to unavailing guessing, and then coaxing, to little Nan's great delight; and her laugh rang out gleefully, till she saw papa lay aside his papers, and she sprang forward to hand him the cane, which he found indispensable yet in his weakness. Then her mirth was always hushed, and the laughing eyes grew sweetly sober and pitiful; yet, prompted by a fine instinct, she did not look at him when he took it from her with a quiet "Thank you, my little girl," and took the first few painful steps with the unaccustomed support.

Mike accompanied them, at Captain Claxton's urgent invitation, warmly seconded by Robert. Falling a little behind the others, their conversation took a more personal direction.

"And are you giving up school for good then, Robbie?"

"Yes, I am," was the decided answer. "Father says for this summer; but I can see just how things stand as well as any one. Now look here, Mike," and in his eagerness Robert stopped short, wheeled about, and faced his deeply interested audience, "it is the same as if we were just beginning in the world; it is of no use for us to put on airs; it would be ungrateful, too, to those who have helped us in our difficulties."

"'Twouldn't be much like your father to do it," interrupted Mike, who had an almost worshipful admiration for Captain Claxton.

"Perhaps it would trouble your conscience a little to say as much for his son," with a little laugh, and a cheek flushing slightly at the recollection of some former passages in his life not so very far back. "But to return to biz" —

"Don't, Bob: don't use slang. Mr. Westlake says that it is a habit that sticks to a boy like vile mud to the clothes, and looks as much unlike the gentleman."

"I know. But honestly, Mike, I do believe I take to it naturally, as a duck to the water. I am sure I don't know where I take it from; but it is out before I think of it. I don't think I should admire it much in father or Mr. Westlake. What I was going to say, though, is, if I begin school in the fall, father must hire a clerk; and his wages added to my expenses at school would be a pretty considerable sum, and put further off the payment of this borrowed capital. We shall none of us ever feel satisfied till we stand fair and square again, and 'owe no man any thing.' Father is going to teach me book-keeping, and I presume I have as much *school* education as half the business-men. I never calculated to make any thing else of myself. A successful, public-spirited merchant can be just as influential as a professional man."

"Ye-es," said Mike, slowly tracing a figure in the sand with the toe of his boot.

"And we business-men," continued Robert a little pompously, "have got to make the money — and the quarrels and scrapes to keep

you lawyers"; for Mike had, with much humility and many blushes, made Robert the confidant of his secret hopes. He flushed a little now at the words or tone.

"Sure, now, Rob, I think these flings at lawyers are a little mean."

"Look at Mr. Harris. He'll take up any cause, and both sides of it, if he can, for money."

"Faith, thin, ye may look at Brown & Murdock. There's merchants for ye, that chate ivery way, — the spalpeens, — and niver'll kape an honest clerk fornenst 'em." (Mike's old Hibernicisms rolled out thick and fast when he was excited.) "There's niver an honest merchant nor Misther Westlake, and niyer a man that he beat dare say 'twere by any dirty trick, nor that iver's the day he left his religion outside, bless him!"

Rob regarded his companion with a little good-natured amusement.

"That's true for Mr. Westlake every time: I'll niver say no to that. Make as good a lawyer as he is, mavourneen, and you may trade at *my* store on as long time as you like,

and — why, I declare ! father and Nan are out of sight, and mother's nice pudding spoiling, maybe. Now, me jewel, *two* big saucers of that same pudding to the fellow that'll get to the corner first !”

CHAPTER XII.

A GROUP of schoolboys were wending their way down the village street. They are none of them strangers to us: all of them are old friends, or acquaintances, at least.

There is Charlie Elliott, the "born gentleman," as Mike mentally called him upon that memorable morning of his first introduction to Mr. Jones's school. Frank Moore, a little taller, but with hair as curly and cheeks as rosy as ever. Dorr Blakeslee, bright and keen-witted as formerly, the life of every company; but there is no profanity in his jokes now. Those holy names which fell so carelessly from his lips in the old days linger there often still; but they are spoken now with a loving reverence, with eyes kindling with fervent light.

There, too, is Will Harnden, with the same curl on his lips (it has grown fast to them),

and Harry Anderson, who is merely a reflection of Will Harnden, whose influence over him, we fear, is far from good.

But the centre of the group, who is telling with true Irish humor a story which is received with tremendous applause by his audience—can this be Mike Rooney, Rob Claxton's "lumbering paddy," the dirty, ragged offshoot from Shane Rooney's hovel?

Truly there is a marvellous change. Perhaps these comrades of his, who one and all liked Mike thoroughly, thought, if they ever thought about it at all, that the change had come of itself; that the Irish boy's coarseness and ignorance, his dirt and his uncouth habits, had dropped from him of themselves. Little did these boys, the petted sons of refined parents, accustomed to the ways of culture, know of the tough battles which poor Mike had daily to fight with these dragons of old habits. Often at first he came from the conflict weak, wounded, and almost disheartened, feeling that at best he was not more than half victor, and the old Tempter whispering, "What was the use? he couldn't make any

thing of himself anyway — the likes o' him, Shane Rooney's boy, settin' up for a gintleman, indade!"

But, after he had given himself to Christ on that blessed Saturday night, it was settled then; he *could not* give an inch of ground to his old enemies; he was far more the son of God than the son of Shane Rooney, and he must not dishonor his Father. The neglected, weed-grown soil of his heart must be constantly digged and cultivated, for out of it must grow, not alone "whatsoever things are *true*, whatsoever things are *honest*, whatsoever things are *just*," but also "whatsoever things are *pure*, whatsoever things are *lovely*, whatsoever things are of good report."

In Mr. Westlake, his kind patron, Mike had one friend who saw and appreciated his struggles: as the boy said himself, he had never, at the worst, lacked a helping hand since the day Bob Claxton, dear old fellow, had found him a place in Mr. Westlake's office.

The broad, homely, freckled face had grown very pleasant and strangely dear to the gentleman, for whom Mike would have died if it had been necessary.

But Mike has finished his story, and the laughing group have halted at a cheery call from Robert Claxton, who, returning from an errand, considers himself fortunate in securing a pleasant walk down town with his old school-fellows.

Charlie Elliott volunteers to repeat Mike's story to Rob as the best thing out, and Mike reddens with pleasure.

In the midst of it, while Mike's heart and cheeks are glowing with modest satisfaction, they turn the corner near O'Connelly's grocery. A reeling, bloated woman, with her shawl falling from her shoulders, her bonnet perched ludicrously on one side of her head, and her dress unfastened, ran towards them, with her arms extended and her shawl flapping in the breeze, till she seized Mike, calling him in maudlin tones her "darlint" and her "jewel."

Poor Mike! The boys all stood still. Will Harnden spoke first with a loud laugh, —

"Go it, Biddy! look out for your shawl."

Robert said impulsively, "Let him alone, Mrs. Rooney, he doesn't belong to you now; and Charlie Elliott, stung by another taunt

from Will Harnden, stepped forward and put his arm in Mike's, saying kindly, "Never mind it, old fellow, come on."

But if Mike had wished to shake her off, and he hardly knew what he did wish, he could not have done it without using force, for her arms were clasped tightly around him, and her vile breath in his face, while she in turns called him by every Irish term of endearment, and then berated him for lavin' his ould mither for his grand cronies.

Mike was only human. Pride and self-respect were newly awakened and very sensitive, and every hardly-mounted step upwards made his former degradation more revolting to him. The poor boy was sorely tempted to wrench off her clasp, and go on with his companions. But Jesus kept his promise to his child, that he should not be tempted above that he was able to bear. It was not tenderness, but right and justice, that awakened first in Mike's heart; he knew all her habits, knew that, in the condition in which she was now, she would fall in the street before she had half reached her distant home; already her head was sinking heavily on his shoulder.

With a great effort he said unsteadily, "Come, mother, I will go home with you."

But this was not to be accomplished at once : the woman roused herself, resisting, and poured forth a torrent of vile language. Charlie and Rob, feeling intuitively that Mike would rather they should not hear any more, bade him a kind good-by and started ; the others followed, Will Harnden with a coarse laugh echoed by Harry Anderson. Mike drew a long breath, and wiped the perspiration from his forehead. After much coaxing he at last persuaded her to accompany him. He covered her carefully with her shawl, tied her bonnet on her head, and then, supporting her with his strong young arm, he walked with bowed head and shamed face through the village.

It was a long walk, and his burden grew heavier and more helpless with every step ; but Mike Rooney was a better boy at the end of it than at the beginning. He began to feel dimly that just now this was his cross, and he must bear it bravely if he would have the approval of his Master. And as the walk

grew more lonely, he remembered with a feeling of tenderness that she was his *mother*, and his warm Irish heart brought tears of self-reproach to his eyes.

It was not the first time that he had encountered her in this condition, and taken her home; but it had happened when he was alone before. The boys would remember it when he met them at school to-morrow: he certainly should. And then the same thing might occur again at any time.

But now his duty was clear. He fortified himself with a mute prayer for help, and made a firm resolution that wherever and however he met her, he would do what he could for her. He had long ago ceased to cherish any hope of her reformation: she was seldom quite sober during her waking hours.

It was nearly dark when he returned to Mr. Westlake's office; but that gentleman, stopping for a moment in Captain Claxton's store, had been informed of the whole occurrence in Rob's graphic style.

Mr. Westlake listened, deeply interested, his fine eyes growing moist as Rob related

their going off together midst the laughs of Will and Harry, and how Mike said not a word to them; adding, in his generous indignation, —

“Why don’t they go up north, to work on that new railroad? McCarthy has gone, and O’Flinn. I wish they were in Botany Bay, or somewhere where they would never turn up here again!”

“Don’t say that to Mike, Robert. You must not try to heal my poor boy’s wounds that way: there might be a scar worse than the wound.” And, gathering up his mail, he left the store.

In less than a week Mike’s resolution was again put to the test. This time it was in a pouring rain. But there was no one with him but Frank Moore; and he placed his own umbrella in Mike’s hand to shield the poor woman, ran home himself, and never spoke of it to Mike or any one else.

God often kindly lightens the cross for us in unexpected ways. A few days after, Mike called upon his old, first friend, Rob Claxton, with a very grave, sad face, and red eyes.

"Why! what is the matter, Mike? What has happened?" exclaimed Rob, his mind running over a dozen probable and improbable calamities.

A customer came in, and Mike drew back till she had finished her purchase and left.

"Now, then?" said Rob impatiently.

"My folks are all going to move away — going to-morrow morning," Mike answered, with a burst of hot tears.

It was with difficulty that Rob restrained a joyful hurrah. He tried in vain to think what he could say that would be decorous and kind without compromising his truthfulness. At last he did say, —

"I am sorry for you, Mike, — sorry you feel so badly about it," he added.

Mike's face grew very red, and he fumbled awkwardly with his handkerchief.

"But that's just the matter, Bobby. I am afraid I don't feel rale sorra — if I only could! I wish I could cry a barrel of tears; and I'd coax 'em to stay, if it wor only true like. An' they me own father and mither and brothers! Och, it's a brute and a haythen

I am, sure!" and Mike gave way to his deep, strangely-mingled sorrow.

Robert comforted him as well as he could, advising him to talk with Mr. Westlake all about it, and entering warmly into all Mike's generous devices for the comfort of the migratory family.

As we shall not have occasion to refer to the Rooney family again, we will say here, that Mike followed them long with kind letters and presents and prayers; but as none of them could write, and they were often on the wing, he soon lost all trace of them.

CHAPTER XIII.

"A FISHING-PARTY! That's a splendid idea! Let's go down to Glen Cove. Pshaw! it isn't too far, either, — only a mile and a half."

The speaker was Charlie Elliott, and his companions were Frank Moore and Will Harnden. Frank had suggested it, and Will had entered into it as cordially as he ever did into any thing, for he was an indolent fellow.

"Who'll go?" he asked. "Are you going to make a big thing of it?"

"Rob must go," said Charlie: "he hasn't had a holiday since he has been in the store, and I know Captain Claxton will spare him one afternoon."

"And Dorr," suggested Frank.

"And Harry," said Will.

"Let's ask Mike too," said Frank.

Will sneered a little.

"Yes, we will," answered Charlie. "And

I tell you, Will Harnden, you can turn up your nose at Mike now, but you'll see the day that you'll take off your hat to Mr. Rooney. There's brain under that yellow hair, and Mr. Westlake will give him a fair chance. I shouldn't wonder if he headed the whole heap of us yet."

"I wish John Graham would go," said Frank.

"Well, he won't," Will said; "it will be beneath his dignity and his sanctimony. I dare say he will think it a sin for you to go, Frank, and Rob, and the rest. Ain't you afraid he'll church you?"

Charlie interposed, "I don't think that is the reason Graham wouldn't go; but he hasn't any fun in him, and then he seems so much older. Who else?"

Frank took off his cap, ran his fingers through his curls, and then settled his cap again with much deliberation. "Let's ask the girls too," he said, his cheeks growing a little rosier, "and make a regular picnic of it."

Will uttered an exclamation of impatience. "You're a regular *gal-boy*, Frank Moore! You ought to wear a sun-bonnet, so that you could

play with the girls all the time," he said in an exasperating tone. "I wouldn't be such a spooney. I wouldn't give that," with a snap of his fingers, "for all the girls in the village. And we sha'n't have half the fun if we have them tagging after us. There'll be their hooks to bait, and lines to set, and all that bother. And then the plague of it is, you have to be so careful what you say, — on your very best behavior all the time. Bah! I a'n't none of your gal-boys."

Charlie Elliott looked at him steadily, with something very like a curl on his own lip. "If it has that effect upon you, Will Harnden, you had better keep them with you. And I may as well tell you now, that such vile stories as you told yesterday are as offensive to a gentleman as to a lady; and, if you want to go by ourselves to have that kind of entertainment, I decline the privilege now."

"And you consider yourself a gentleman of the first water, I suppose."

"I do," said Charlie proudly. "It is the privilege of every American citizen, and I do not mean to forfeit my right to it."

Frank surveyed him with proud admiration. "Charlie can talk so much better than I," he thought.

Soon, with true boyish impetuosity, Charlie broke into a laugh, and flinging away his momentary anger with the wisp of grass he had been playing with, "There, Will, never mind me, old fellow. I will save the rest for a Fourth of July oration. And you may call me a *gal-boy* too, if you like, for I do like the girls as well as Frank, and I am not a bit ashamed to own it. I don't think the bother is any thing, and I think we always have more fun, and of a better kind too, when the company is half girls."

"'Twon't be half this time; for I sha'n't take any girl," said Will doggedly.

"Perhaps because" — began Charlie, but he stopped short. "Do as you like," he said pleasantly. "Gentlemen with ladies always have greater privileges along the route though, you know."

"We ought to arrange to start by two," said Frank.

And with this understanding they separated

to see the other boys, and to canvass the matter as far as practicable before school-time. Rob Claxton entered into it with glowing enthusiasm, suggesting and dwelling upon every detail of the programme with infinite enjoyment. He was alone in the store; his father had just gone to his dinner, and, after the boys had gone, his thoughts still ran on in the same pleasant channel. He had even taken, in imagination, the little walk over to Mrs. Griffith's. It would only be a step out of his way when he went home to his dinner — and he need not go in, he could ask Winnie at the door. He could see now the pretty glen, with its soft green grass, and the rippling waters of the cove; it was just the prettiest place, and he had not been down there this summer.

He was clearing the counter, working as busily as he thought, when he suddenly stopped with a delicate muslin poised on the edge of the shelf. It had just occurred to him for the first time, that Saturday afternoon, the very busiest time of the whole week, was not just the season that a merchant would take

for vacation. "But I guess father would try to manage some way. It was only the other day he told me that I had been so faithful, and I haven't been out of the store in business hours since we opened. I guess he will get along."

Just here he recollected last Saturday afternoon. He had told Katie and Sibyl afterwards that they were hurried to death, and could have kept two more busy all the time, there was such a rush; for their goods were all new and well selected, and Captain Claxton had always been a popular merchant.

"I know he would try and get along some way though," he argued with himself, "if he knew how much I want to go; it is only for one afternoon."

What brought before him then (was it chance? I don't believe it) a picture of his father's pale face as he threw himself upon the sofa late last Saturday night, weary even to utter exhaustion?

The dinner-hour was none too long, for Rob fought a battle, and won a victory, with the help promised to all who seek it. Do

you say he would have come out on the right side if he had been a good son, whether he were a Christian or not? Perhaps he might: so you might climb a mountain by only your hands and feet; but it would be far easier and safer if you had a strong staff, upon which you could lean with perfect security, which would always hold firmly, no matter how treacherous the ground under your plodding feet might be.

Robert had this staff, and he leaned upon it now; for duty at first seemed all up-hill work. He did not go away by himself, and kneel down for a long season of secret prayer. He stood at the counter, his hands busy, and ready at any time for customers; but just as much his heart sought help from God, to control his inclinations and stand in his place, not like *a martyr to the cause*, but cheerily and heartily as ever, without his father ever knowing any thing about the fishing-party.

This was Tuesday. Rob had won the victory; but there were more skirmishes before he was through. You know them, boys. First there were six boys to urge him, put-

ting the matter in the most favorable light, and this, not once, but many times; then he was sure to come upon them at street-corners, talking gayly over their plans.

His sister Sibyl told him that first night that Frank Moore had asked her to go, and he said you were going, and Winnie Griffiths.

"Whew!" said Rob, "how did Frank know that? But I am not going, Tibby; for I can't leave the store Saturday. And don't say any thing about it before father."

Sibyl comprehended the situation: so she only said very tenderly, "I wish you could go, Robbie." After a moment, "Then Winnie will not go."

There *was* a little comfort in that. It was very selfish, he knew. But Robert was very much like the rest of us; and it would not have been quite pleasant to think they would all go, and enjoy it just as much, whether he went or not.

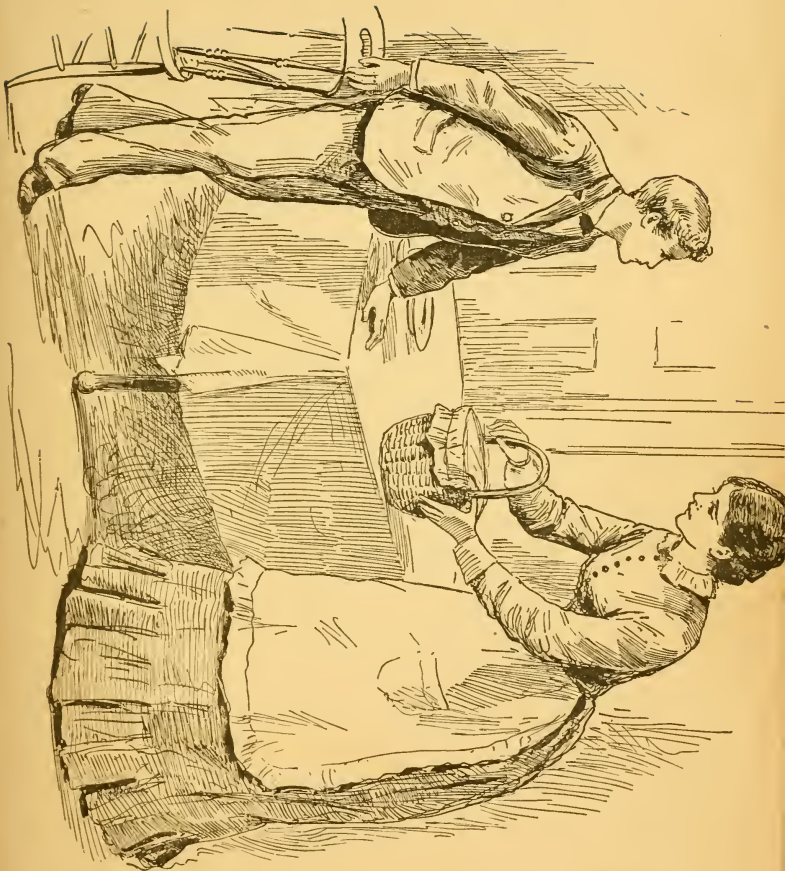
And Robert grew stronger after every one of these skirmishes with self. Never since he had been in the store, had Mr. Claxton known him so considerate, so efficient, and cheerful, as during that week.

Friday evening Captain Claxton had some business out to uncle Macey's. Saturday noon he was a little late from his dinner, and uncle Macey came in with him.

"Robert," he said, "your mother wants you to do an errand for her this afternoon, and uncle Macey will stay and help me. You had better go right away ; for she is in a hurry."

Robert's face was darker when he left the store than it had been all the week. It was the old temptation which is always coming upon us, "What is the use?" He had given up the fishing-party because he thought it was a duty, and thought he could not be spared. Yet he was of no particular consequence. His mother wanted an errand done, and uncle Macey, accidentally coming in to market, could fill his place—anybody could have done it probably. So where was the need of his sacrifice? These struggles are not little things. God watches them with earnest care ; for they make or mar our Christian character.

Before he reached home, Rob could see that it was all right yet, and he sat down to



his dinner alone with a clear brow. Sibyl was up stairs. His mother came in just as he had finished.

"I am ready now, mother," he said cheerily. "Father said you wanted me this afternoon."

"Yes," said Mrs. Claxton demurely; "it will take you all this afternoon. I want you to take this basket down to Glen Cove," and she handed him a basket covered with a dainty napkin. Then, smiling at his amazed stare, she added, "Perhaps you had better call for Winnie on your way."

Just then Sibyl came down.

"O Rob, isn't it grand? Father found out all about it some way, and went out to uncle Macey's last night to get him, so that you could go."

And Robert did go, and enjoyed it thoroughly.

CHAPTER XIV.

MR. BRADY'S room looked very inviting. The windows were thrown open to admit the soft, summer, evening air; the light was turned so low that it was only a twilight gleam; and the flowers in vases and from outside the windows filled the air with delicious fragrance.

Mr. Brady sat alone by the centre-table, his kind face, marked with deep lines of pain and thought, turned towards the door.

He had not long to wait. There was a regular, measured tread outside, and he rose with a smile of welcome, saying to himself, "That is John Graham's step"; then two, with a bound, and Rob Claxton and Dorr Blakeslee entered, glowing with heat and motion. Frank Moore soon followed, bringing an apology for Mike's unavoidable absence.

The door was closed now. There were

no more to expect; for the number which made up "our set" at the boys' prayer-meeting was not so large as "our set" on the street or playground.

If you think a prayer-meeting must be a dull place, such as no live boy would frequent from real love of it or enjoyment in it, I wish you could have been there. It was not like the Wednesday evenings at the church any more than the social enjoyment of boys is like the social enjoyment of men. They were just as much boys in their Christian life as on the playground, and God meant they should be.

They sang first, without any one giving it out, — it was Rob who started it, — one of their Sunday-school hymns, which they all knew and loved. Then Mr. Brady made a short, earnest prayer, asking their Saviour to be present, and to make it a good meeting to them all. After that Frank took the seat at the table, for it was his turn, turned up the light, and read a few verses, carefully selected, from different places in the Bible, but bearing on the same point; then turned

down the light again, and resumed his seat with the group at the window.

They all talked about the subject which had been read (sometimes, though not often, all at once), asking all the questions they chose, and applying it, not to the saints or to the Jews, but to the man and boys in that room in all their daily life, with its joys and trials, its temptations and escapes.

Finally the talk turned upon prayer; and John Graham spoke tremulously, with deep feeling, of the strength and comfort which he drew from long seasons of secret prayer; how, sometimes, — and his usually pale cheek glowed and his eyes grew bright, as he went on, — “Christ seemed so near, he could hardly be nearer in heaven”; and hours went by unheeded.

In that dim light the presence of the others was no restraint, and he spoke with all the eloquence of strong feeling. Rob Claxton bent forward, listening eagerly, sitting opposite Mr. Brady. If there had been more light, that gentleman would have remarked the troubled workings of the boy's face.

After John Graham paused, there was a deep silence for a moment, — a silence full of varied thoughts. Then Rob drew a long sigh, and said, almost in a whisper, "I am afraid I don't know any thing about it. I never could pray an hour in my life." His head drooped a little. "I have tried lots of times, but I couldn't. I don't believe," he added with sad frankness, "I ever made a prayer much more than fifteen minutes long."

And after this confession he raised his eyes to Mr. Brady's face, searching closely for an expression of amazement, but he saw nothing of the kind.

"If you go to your father with a request, Robert, do you try to see how long you can be making it?"

"No, sir," said Robert, and his face brightened a little, "I only think of getting it granted; I don't think much about the form."

"Except you would not approach him in any disrespectful way. You would carefully avoid in your manner and spirit what you knew he did not like, and strive to cultivate what was particularly pleasing to him?"

"I should do that anyway, sir, I hope, whether I had a favor to ask or not."

"Yes; and you are the same boy in God's family. We will talk this over a little. You say you cannot find enjoyment in long seasons of prayer, as Graham does. You do pray? how and where?"

Robert hesitated a moment. "Regularly every morning and evening, sir; but after that, anywhere that I am. Sometimes not more than five words. If I am likely to say or do any thing which a Christian boy ought not, if I feel like being selfish, or angry, or unkind, I say with all my heart, 'Lord, help me now.' Sometimes I say it over and over, and it has always seemed as if he did. Why, some days," he went on eagerly, "when things go hard, you know, it seems to me I am all the time saying it in my heart."

"And you do receive help?"

"I know I do."

"Then never forget to praise and thank, as well as pray. These cries from our hearts, Robert, are 'praying without ceasing.' The apostle never meant being on our knees all

the time, but our hearts going out after God in our need for help ; in our sorrow, for comfort and sympathy ; in our joy, with gratitude ; and in our longing, for the salvation of others, and our desire for more of his Spirit in us in importunate petitions. We are differently constituted, and being Christians does not mean cutting us over and making us all alike. Graham, with his contemplative temperament, will have seasons of rapt communion with his Saviour, the sweetness of which you may never taste on earth. But you will have help for your urgent, pressing need, immediate answers to prayer which will almost surprise you. Leaning upon him, he will make stronger your manhood, and ‘you shall run and not be weary, and walk and not faint.’ Some he calls to lie upon his bosom, and some to walk the busy ways of life ; but both are in his service.”

They were still a few moments, till Frank started softly, “Anywhere with Jesus,” and they all joined.

When it was finished, they kneeled down, and one after another prayed earnestly. When

they rose from their knees it was their usual time for going home ; but Dorr said, —

“Mr. Brady, may I ask you — I have wanted to ever so long — why you were not a minister?”

Mr. Brady did not answer for a moment, then he said, “When I first became a Christian, it was the one desire of my heart. I did not feel then that I could serve the Lord in any other way. I spent one year in college with this end always in view : I can see now that I neglected opportunities for serving him by the way, looking forward to the end of my full preparation. At the end of that first year my father died, and with his death all our prospects in life were changed. My invalid mother and two young sisters had nothing to depend upon but my exertions.”

He paused a moment, and his voice trembled when he went on. “In bitter disappointment my heart cried again and again, ‘Lord, how can I ever do thy work now?’ And an answer came to my heart which I had not looked for. I had looked for some unexpected way to open ; but it was only, ‘Do *this* for

me.' And all along the weary way he gave me sweet comfort and peace in the doing, and many precious opportunities to serve him. When at last the way might have been clear, my youth and health were gone. Yet, in looking back over the years, I can see that it was not through any mistake or accident. God knew my place and my work. One request I kept before him, that I might be the instrument of sending another into the vineyard in my place. This too, the prayer of years, he is kindly granting," and he laid his hand affectionately upon John Graham's shoulder. "I am satisfied: his ways are best."

They bade him good-night, and went out into the sweet summer night, talking softly.

Even yet, they always felt how much they missed Charlie Elliott. In every other gathering he held, by cheerful consent, the most prominent place. At first, he met with them sometimes, but only because they urged him so strongly: he did not like it, and now he never came. Yet he was always remembered.

Soon their ways separated, and Dorr and

Robert went on alone. Dorr had scarcely spoken since they left Mr. Brady's room. Rob made some remark, which he answered absently: so he, too, went on with his own thoughts. When they turned into the quiet street where Captain Claxton lived, Dorr spoke, —

"There is something I want to talk about with you, Robbie. Did you ever think you were called to be a minister?"

"Never!" said Rob most decidedly, stopping short.

Dorr sighed. "But you would like to be one?"

"No, I would not," as decidedly as before.

Dorr looked up suddenly. "I thought it must be the natural wish of every Christian."

"Why, Dorr, I should do more hurt than good. I know I should."

"Perhaps so," Dorr said very slowly. "But I can never think of liking to do any thing else. You know father always talks of my being a lawyer. I can't tell you, Rob, how I have felt about it ever since I have loved Jesus. It seems just like turning out of the way, and

I could not put any heart in it. I want to preach Christ. If the Lord only had called me," he said with quivering lips; "but I suppose he sees I should never be fit."

Robert looked into the sad, downcast face, reading its full expression in the moonlight: then his own lighted up with a sudden inspiration.

"Dorr, how do you expect the Lord to call you? What are you looking for?"

Dorr looked up inquiringly.

"I am not wise enough to advise you; but if the Lord had put it into my heart at the first, and kept it there, I think I should have been 'called.'"

"Do you really mean, Robert — do you think that is the way?" he asked eagerly.

"Yes, I do. Ask Mr. Brady."

"I will; but I will ask my Saviour to-night. I thank you so much!"

CHAPTER XV.

THE winter came on, — a winter of more than usual interest to the boys of our village; for it would be the last of their boy-life together. With another season, Charlie, Dorr, and John Graham would enter college. Graham, by unwearied study, had prepared himself for entering the sophomore class, thus cutting off one year of preparation.

Frank Moore, too, was in the graduating class of the Union School, and Will Harnden, though not prepared to graduate, declared his intention of leaving school when the "rest" did. Only Mike would remain of the set, and he began far behind the others.

In view of the circumstances, Mr. Jones, their faithful teacher, tried his utmost to make this last the best winter of their school-life. He found many ways of throwing new interest and new attractions around the old, beaten

path. If there were any royal road to learning, certainly Mr. Jones's pupils were on the highway.

They formed a literary society in the fall, enrolling in its membership Mr. Jones and all the higher class, including by courtesy Rob Claxton, who still kept up his course of reading with the others.

After much deliberation and consultation, it was named "Plato's School." "With variations," Dorr added. Its object was "culture and intellectual entertainment"; its members were thirteen,—eight boys and four girls, and Mr. Jones as president *ex officio*; its time of public meeting, every alternate Tuesday evening; the place, an unused school-room, lavishly decorated with evergreen and house-plants, so that it might be appropriately dubbed "Plato's Garden"; the badge worn by all the members, a small silver star with the letters "P. S." in German text on one side, and on the reverse their motto and password, "Pressing on."

These preliminaries were very readily adjusted. The scope and order of the exercises

were more weighty matters, and required more consideration. But these, too, at last assumed harmonious shape and form, and were transcribed in the chronicles of "Plato's School."

There was to be at each public meeting, first music, then an original essay or selected recitation, followed by a lecture from the "Plato" of the evening.

The appointments were to be made three weeks in advance by the president. It was written down "in unchangeable Median and Persian" that there was to be "no shirking or backing down"; and to this pledge they all affixed their signatures.

"To obviate the rush and crowd of the unappreciative masses," Charlie Elliott suggested, "every member should have the privilege of inviting to each meeting only three, and that the doors should be unrelentingly closed to all but such invited auditors"; which motion was carried by acclamation, and thus the attendance always limited to fifty-two, which would just fill the cosey "garden."

The entertainment and advantage this little society afforded exceeded their most sanguine

expectations. I wish every school might form a similar one, and that they might have for their president just such an earnest, judicious, wide-awake man as Mr. Jones. The citizens of the village, ready to join in any scheme of the principal for the good of the school, accepted as an honor every invitation, and the small audience often included the first talent of the village.

The lectures were prepared carefully, with much thought and study; and if they were not all, or perhaps any of them, "wonderful triumphs of genius," they were most of them very creditable to the young aspirants. And two, at least, who have since held vast audiences entranced by their eloquence, and charmed by their grace, made their first effort, and received their first impetus, in "Plato's school," which, I believe, continues still a permanent institution. I am sure I have often wished that the *gaucheries* of some of our popular lecturers could have had the benefit of Mr. Jones's kind, watchful criticism and correct taste.

Charlie Elliott's theme was, "Made or

Marred." Did some sad-eyed angel give him a prophetic vision? It was well treated, and as it opened the course, it was highly applauded by the very select audience.

Rob Claxton's was, "Three Scenes at Bull Run"; and as he brought all his enthusiasm to the work, and united with it close and thorough study, he carried his audience with him. Certainly Winnie Griffiths thought it a masterpiece.

Frank Moore's was, "Life in 1775," delivered in costume, the quaint old Continentals making with his bright, round face and youthful figure the most ludicrous contrast.

But Dorr Blakeslee came out, beyond all question, the star lecturer of the season. His subject, "What am I?" was happily chosen, and he poured his whole soul into it. There was no prouder man that night in all the world than bluff old Captain Blakeslee, as he sat wiping away the tears of gratified affection, occasionally looking around to gather up the rapt admiration of more intelligent listeners to add to his own.

The stately Judge Norman went forward

at the close of the meeting to take the young orator by the hand, and express in no stinted terms his appreciation.

Dr. Elliott said, "A lad of great promise. We must keep our eye upon him; he is sure to make his mark."

Perhaps only Mr. Westlake remembered in the excitement that the boy was more than the lecture, and watched somewhat anxiously to see how he would bear his applause. He was glad to see that Dorr did not prolong his ovation upon any pretext, but hurried away as quickly as he might; and he smiled with satisfaction as he saw that the companion of his walk was Mr. Brady.

When Dorr went to his room that night, his father's last words to him were, "I shall live to see you on the judge's bench yet, my boy; you sha'n't want for money to push you on. With your head and my pockets, we shall see, we shall see," with a chuckle of satisfaction. "All this will I give you, and the glory of it." It was held up before the Holy One of old.

Ah, Dorr, yours is a far more dangerous

road to travel than even John Graham's, with his poverty, his delicate health, and morbid reserve.

Ever since the summer after his talk with Rob, and afterward with Mr. Brady, Dorr had settled himself, with a restful feeling which he had not known before, in the conviction that God had appointed his work, — to proclaim the glorious gospel, Christ's salvation. He knew that he had talents. He felt sometimes, with a thrill of joy so intense that it was nearly pain, that he had latent powers which only a wider field and intenser life could develop; and surely the Master who had made the instrument would best know how to sweep its cords so as to bring out all its power and all its harmony.

Since this full consecration, he had read and studied and thought with greater energy than ever before. Yet never had he been brighter or more companionable; not even Will Harnden enjoyed his society any the less.

Yet Dorr had one secret sorrow. By Mr. Brady's advice, he had said nothing to his father of his choice of a profession. Mr.

Brady had said, "I would leave it to God and time. The Lord can so change your father's heart that it will be his desire as much as yours. We will make this a subject of constant prayer, and for the present I would let it rest there."

And Dorr acted upon his advice; yet the feeling that he was not perfectly open with his father grieved him. Captain Blakeslee was an uneducated man, rough and profane, but, as a father to his two children, kind and indulgent. He had made his money serving as captain of one of our lake boats, and had only left the water for the sake of his family. What the little four-year-old Jack might become could not, of course, be predicted with any certainty; but for Dorr his ambitions and his expectations were almost unbounded. The judge's bench was an easy probability, and the President's seat not at all impossible. "Money and brains can do a'most any thing," was the beginning and end of all his schemes for Dorr.

When his son became a "convert," as he termed it, the captain was in a great rage;

but when he found, contrary to all his expectations, that Dorr did not lecture him, did not set himself up for a pattern, did not become "long-faced" and "obstinate," was not, in short, any the worse son for "his new tack," he let the matter alone altogether, preferring to seem entirely oblivious, with the tacit understanding on his part, "You go your way, and I'll go mine, and don't bother about it." With this state of affairs Dorr was obliged to rest. His part was to make his religion, by its workings, win his father's regard.

He would have felt that he had gained one step if he could have known how much his father marvelled at his entire disuse of profane language. It was like a hand-to-hand conflict for the poor youth, for his ears and tongue had been familiar with it ever since his remembrance. His father had laughed long and loudly at his oaths lisped in baby anger; and as he grew older, at home and with his companions he had blasphemously used his ready wit to make them startling and amusing. Even now his conscience was stung daily by his father's repetition of such expressions caught from himself.

Sometimes at first old habits were too strong for him ; then even his father understood the sudden silence and look of deep pain. But it was long now since an oath had defiled his lips.

The captain swore more and worse than ever, out of mere bravado, but (and this Dorr did not know) he could not do it unconsciously any more ; from very shame there was an inward protest against every profane word.

CHAPTER XVI.

A FRIENDSHIP, which was the object of a good deal of remark and wonder, was strengthening daily between John Graham and Frank Moore.

“Such an odd attraction!” Charlie Elliott said. “Graham is grave and sombre, Frank merry and happy as the day is long: Graham looks always anxious and care-worn, Frank contented as a cricket: Graham sighs, and Frank smiles. Why, in their very looks such a funny contrast! Frank is short and plump, and rosy as a pretty girl; Graham tall and pale and thin,—a face and figure born to a black coat and white neck-tie; and Graham must be eighteen.”

But there were a good many elements in this friendship which were beyond Charlie's ken. Their aims, their hopes, were one. This was what first drew them within the circle

of attraction; next, their way home from the prayer-meeting at Mr. Brady's was together for several blocks.

For a long time they had been pupils at the same school, and members of the same Sunday-school class, yet Frank knew him scarcely more than if they were at the antipodes. He had no "chums" like the others. He had never joined in their amusements, and they "counted him out" in all their merry, happy school-life except in class, where he was always promptly and thoroughly prepared, yet with no appearance of triumph or elation.

Dorr Blakeslee called him once, long ago, a "lesson-machine."

If any one had talked to Frank Moore about "the communion of saints," he might not have heard with any very clear understanding; but, when these two had sought and found the same Saviour, there was a strong, new feeling in Frank's heart toward the quiet student—a new interest. And when their hearts were warm and tender in Mr. Brady's room, not even John Graham could shut the door of reserve at once upon coming out of it. Yet

it was long before the kindly feeling grew to real earnest intimacy.

Boys, if you should be told that one whom you met every day — one of your classmates — came to school every morning *hungry*, and went and came, and went again unsatisfied, day after day and week after week, while you hoarded or wasted your abundance in careless security, how would you feel? how would you act? For there are few schools where there is not such a sufferer, perhaps more than one. I do not mean with hungry mouth, but hungry *heart*. Open your eyes and hearts, and look about you.

Let me tell you John Graham's story, and perhaps you will better understand me. He was his widowed mother's only child, and they were all the world to each other. Happiness does not depend upon riches; for Johnny, in the warmth and fulness of his mother's love, never felt a want, though his food was coarse and his clothes patched. She lived apart and had few acquaintances, for her daily work for their support filled her time, and her boy filled her heart. She was his

only teacher and his only playmate, and he never wished for any other.

No picture could ever be so beautiful to John Graham as the picture, shut tight in his heart, of that little sitting-room in the old brown house; for he left all the sunshine of his life there, and when he came out it was to shiver in the cold, gray shadows. For he had to come out. His mother died suddenly when the boy was ten years old. He could not bear even now to think of that bitter agony and the weary, stifling days which followed. His uncle, Mark Graham, a cold, hard man, whom he had never seen before, went from our village, attended to all the funeral arrangements in a dry business-way, and told the sobbing, frightened boy that he supposed there was no one to do for him now but himself; his mother's brothers-in-law were poor, miserable shacks that couldn't take care of their own young ones, and so of course they had a swarm of them.

The child had nothing to say for himself. His uncle's word and manner filled him with a miserable suspicion that he ought not to

have been at all ; or, as he could not help that now, he ought to have gone out of the way when his mother went. But as he could not help that either, he accepted with shivering meekness the life which he had to keep and the means to sustain it, which his uncle stated to him without consulting the boy's wishes, or taking any trouble to spare his feelings.

He should "take him, and clothe and school him. He supposed he could help a little with the chores. He must be willing to work and to be told. He might do something towards paying his way. He was too big to be a baby."

And John moved his lips to say, "Yes, sir" ; but no sound came forth.

To do Mr. Mark Graham justice, he did not mean to be, he never was intentionally, cruel. He was a sharp business-man, who had made some money, and meant to make more. He had a comfortable home, — very quiet, and not too expensive, — and he and Mrs. Mark Graham had congratulated themselves many times that they had no children, no "incumbrances." So that now, when Provi-

dence seemed to have forestalled him, and thrust this "poor young one" upon him, he felt irritated and annoyed, and knew his wife would be "bothered."

And so the old life was closed with the heavy thud of the clods upon the mother's coffin-lid. The child never spoke of it when he could avoid it. It was the one treasure of his life, and he guarded it carefully. He would not have liked these people to handle it.

The only instructions which Mr. Graham thought necessary to impart to his wife with regard to the boy were, that he guessed he was a good deal of a baby (they must break him of that); but he presumed there wasn't any thing very bad about him—his mother used to be a real nice girl.

And John took up the line of life which they marked out for him, with as much regularity and precision as a machine. He was active, and his perceptions quick: so Mr. Graham found, to his surprise, that a boy was rather handy. He never played: so he did not tear his clothes; and this took a great

load off Mrs. Graham's mind. So, in a way, they were kind to him, or rather, to express it more accurately, not unkind. "He did pretty well, and was amazing quiet," and they endured him.

The week after his arrival in our village, the orphan took his place (with what inward shrinking and dread, no one could know) for the first time in a large school, to all appearance a well-dressed and well-cared-for boy.

It cost him a long struggle to seek on the playground companions who were all strange, and had not sought him. But their merry shouts of laughter came to him as he sat on the step: he thought how pleasant it must be to be one of them, he was so lonely and homesick. So he gathered up courage to go a little nearer, or, rather, the joyous scene drew him on unconsciously. One of the boys saw him, and sang out good-naturedly, —

"Come, little fellow, there! What's your name? Come and help!"

He had never seen the game before. It was very boisterous, and seemed to him very complicated. There were so many, too! And

watching them a few minutes, he grew quite bewildered, and was sure he could never learn to do his part; and he forgot to make any answer, and they forgot him: and so, after a while, he went back to the house. He repeated this two or three times, coming in sooner each time.

The boys, when they thought of it at all, said that he was a "stupid." He resumed his seat and his book, sometimes going down into his heart, for a moment, to look at the dear picture there, sometimes looking out with sad, envious eyes at the happy group sauntering in by twos or threes in chosen friendships.

Habits so soon become fixed! In a month the boys never thought of inviting him to join them, and he never did. They were not unkind to him: they only let him alone, never knowing, quiet and calm and studious as he appeared, that his heart was all the time crying, like a child, for some one to love him, to be free and jovial with him as they were with each other.

By and by he got used to it a little: it did not hurt him so much. He was a bright

scholar, and so he came to love his studies intensely, partly because he had nothing else to love.

When he was sixteen, he was respected by all the school; yet he had never made a friend save Mr. Jones, and Mr. Brady his Sabbath-school teacher.

But through all these years the mother's God had remembered his covenant, and now, in his good time, he came and offered a Saviour's matchless love. Graham was not changed outwardly; but inwardly he lived a new life,—a life consecrated to the Saviour who had first loved him, and whose love came to his lonely heart so sweetly.

And when, following close upon this best blessing, came Frank Moore's pleasant sympathy, stealing so gradually but persistently into his heart and life, his cup seemed running over.

He grew to love him so much! Quiet and undemonstrative as he was, the schoolroom seemed dark, and the most interesting study dull, if Frank's curly head failed to make its appearance. They did not sit together (Gra-

ham had never had a seat-mate); but they sat opposite, and an occasional exchange of glances kept up a perfect understanding.

Frank, who had always had friends and comrades by the dozen, would have been surprised if he had known the passionate strength of Graham's affection for his one friend, and deeply gratified too; for he was a modest little fellow, and Graham was almost a man, and a student of mark.

CHAPTER XVII.

VACATION had come again, but not like former ones, full of long summer days of recreation and busy sports, or lazy enjoyment under the trees or by the brooks, a glad hustling away of books, to lie in darkness and gather dust for long weeks, and then to rustle their leaves stoutly, and marshal their forces for another vigorous campaign.

"The last day at school" had a new and deeper meaning to all our boys but Mike, and made them strangely grave and quiet. Charlie and Dorr tried to recall all their brilliant dreams of college, but somehow for the time they had lost their inspiration. John Graham, with Frank at his side, leaned upon the gate, silent and pale, listening to the last echo of the bell which would never again call them, or send them forth.

Will Harnden threw up his cap with a faint

"Hurrah!" as they had often done before; but this time it met with no response.

Frank Moore rested his hand with unconscious tenderness upon the pile of books which would have no place in his life henceforward, save by what he had drawn out of them and made a part of himself, and for the time he longed with all his heart for another and better year within the old stone walls. John Graham drew a little nearer to him, his sensitive heart shrinking back heavily from encounter with a new world, and the sundering of ties which seemed so much stronger now than ever before.

Just then Mr. Jones appeared in the door; and Charlie Elliott took off his cap and sprang forward with, "Boys, three cheers for Mr. Jones." Such a shout! taken up and thrown back from every part of the grounds: it rang and rang and rang again, with a three times three; and ere it died away Mr. Jones stood among them with bare head, and eyes moist with tears.

"Now three cheers for the dear old house," said Frank; and again the shouts filled the

air, and brought the dwellers in the most distant streets to the doors and windows.

After that the boys breathed freer,—they had worked off the feeling which oppressed them,—and jogged homeward, chatting as usual of the occurrences of the day, its successes and failures, who had done “first-rate,” and who “ought to have been ashamed of themselves,” and what “somebody had heard Judge Norman say” about the class, and “did he really?” and how interested Mr. Westlake looked.

Oddly enough, not one of them spoke of Mr. Dennison's earnest, loving address, which had spread out their situation before them; laid their lives open, with all of good or evil to choose from; showed them this manhood, which was almost within their eager grasp, as a solemn, earnest thing, a gift which, once received, would be a glorious, untold power for all time and eternity,—a gift which it was in the power of each one of them to make a blessing, and a thing God and men should delight to honor, or either a hissing and a curse, or an idle, useless weed which men

should trample under their busy feet. Which should it be?

I said not one of them spoke of this; and yet not one of them had forgotten it. God had sent it to them, "the word in season"; and they had taken it into their own hearts, each in his own way, and in each life it was to make ever afterwards an incentive or a protest. Manhood has such vast *possibilities*, boys; do you ever think of it? "It is," it may be, such "a great thing to be a man."

Charlie was planning to get the most enjoyment possible out of the summer months before he entered upon the dignity of college life. Dorr was to accompany him, rather than John Graham, who had, through Mr. Jones, made arrangements to enter another and less expensive institution, where he could work for his tuition, as Mr. Mark Graham offered his nephew no further aid after he had reached the age of eighteen.

Dorr had always been much more intimate with Charlie than with Graham; indeed it was only recently that he was beginning to understand and appreciate John; but now, some-

what to his own surprise, he felt that if it were left to his choice he should go with this grave, quiet fellow, and feel safer at his side. But Captain Blakeslee scouted the idea at once; "He wa'n't goin' to be a 'charity student;' he rather thought his boy could shine with the best on 'em."

If Dorr could have looked deeper into his father's plans, and seen what result he was confidently looking for, he would have "girded on his armor," and braced himself for the trial.

One load he had thrown off; he had informed his father very deferentially and respectfully of his strong desire and firm determination to become a minister; adding, for Dorr had weighed the matter long and prayerfully, that, if it was his father's will, he would ask for no money to forward his education for this purpose, but would depend upon his own exertions, and work his way through.

To Dorr's surprise, his father did not once interrupt him, but listened with a patience as unexpected as it was unusual. Something in the boy's manner commanded his respect,

and as he looked him keenly over, he felt that it was no idle boyish boast; that Dorr had the stuff in him to make a man, whether he had money or not; that he both could and would do without it if it were necessary. He took a full minute to weigh his answer after Dorr had finished. But really he was not so unprepared for this choice as Dorr had supposed; he had suspected it for some time.

"Tut, tut, boy," he said at last. "If you want to preach when you get through, why, preach; only take some younger and softer sinner than your old father," with a laugh. "But that's a long way ahead. I reckon you won't be none the worse for plenty of money, though you do make so light of it."

"Indeed I don't make light of it, and I thank you more than I can tell, sir," said Dorr, in a tone of such grateful affection that his father was nearly overcome, and, hurriedly opening his purse, he took out a ten-dollar bill, saying, "Well, there, try this," and left the room.

Dorr, too, went his way with a light heart,

hoping and almost believing that there was the beginning of a change of heart at the bottom of his father's unaccountable change of tactics.

But there was nothing of the kind. The shrewd old captain had not given up one iota of his ambitious projects for his son; but he had pondered the matter, and studied his bearing, and he decided to use diversion rather than opposition.

"The boy had too much grit for that," he said to himself; "but give him the whole length of the rope, send him abroad among young men of dash and spirit with plenty of money, and he'd soon come round." And so he only laid his snares, and waited his time.

Frank Moore began the next month with a feeling of conscious importance, taking the place which had long ago been settled upon, behind the counter of an old friend of his father, in a handsome, thriving hardware store. I suppose Mr. Norton's customers that Monday morning did not give much thought to the curly-headed lad who waited upon them so cheerfully, with such hearty effort to please.

He was only a new clerk, a boy, and the village was full of boys. But to Frank Moore this "boy" was the only boy that belonged to him; the boy out of whom he meant to make, with God's blessing, a *man*; one whom it would be worth while for that community to own.

So much for the first fixed fact. And besides that, by and by, step by step, a hardware merchant,—an energetic, thorough, successful business-man,—a man of means and influence. And this was the beginning; and every little detail of the trade, every little service, was one step in his business-walk of life, and therefore not to be despised or slackly performed.

There was another consideration, by no means a light one. He was to begin now to receive a certain fixed salary; not very large for the first year, but his own, of his own earning, and at his own disposal. His father had positively refused, though Frank had urged it warmly, to receive any compensation for his board until he should be eighteen and a larger salary would justify it.

Frank was systematic, as every boy should be. He had covered several sheets of paper with figures, striving to make just the wisest, most judicious, and most satisfactory division of the sum, of which he had not yet received one dollar. So much for clothes, so much for books and papers,—he must read and think,—so much for—what should he put it down? extras? sundries?—the expenses which would come up, and which must be allowed for, a pretty good proportion too; he would know better what they would be another year; then something for presents.

Frank was a generous fellow, and had done many a tough little job to provide money for some present which he longed to give, and made himself very happy in the giving. From the very first copy he set aside a definite proportion as the Lord's, to give in different ways to his cause. First it was a tenth of his salary; but that was so little that he concluded, after weighing the matter carefully, remembering that he intended this for a rule of his life, to make it an eighth. Of course it was a work of time to get his sums nicely

apportioned, for Frank was determined to keep, from the very outset, a strict account with himself; and when he laid down rules he stuck to them.

He held his pencil a long time, and made several heads and a few animals on the paper, while he tried to fix upon the proportion which he could afford to "lay up" regularly as "capital." Before a final decision upon this point, he concluded to wait and ask his father what his clothes had cost for the last year. And so he went to sleep after his first day in Mr. Norton's store, feeling himself quite a methodical man of business.

When his first month's salary was paid, he made his first deposit, then took the eighth which was to belong to the Lord's work, and, dividing it into two parts, rolled one-half in a piece of tissue paper, put on his hat, took it off again, ran his fingers through his hair, rolled and unrolled the little parcel, his cheeks flushing, then said to himself, "I will wait till then—that's better," and, putting it carefully away, went to his dinner.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A VERY pretty young lady was Rob Claxton's sister Katie as she sat by the window one summer morning, looking after him as he walked briskly down town. "How he had grown!" she was thinking; "could he really be seventeen?" His manly walk and business habits were fast stealing away the boy brother; she was more than half conscious of a little feeling of jealousy as he disappeared around the corner.

Her thoughts went back to the fall and winter of two years ago, those months of poverty and sorrow, when they had drawn so closely together, and each bore so tenderly the others' burdens and trials; to the long walks which she and Robbie had taken together to cheer and comfort each other, and learn how to be more of a stay to the dear mother and younger children. Then the long weeks when

she had no word from Richard Hathaway—how Robert's kind, unspoken sympathy had borne her up more than he ever knew. "Did friends grow careless and less tender and loving when the world went smoothly with them?" she questioned, "or was the same deep current of affection there, but when the waters were still and calm, and the sun lighted them, they only seemed shallow?"

Then she blamed herself. Was not Robert growing just what they had wished him to be? She knew his father was proud and satisfied, and that was saying much; for Captain Claxton's standard was high. He had entered into all his work just as she should, she thought, if she had been a man, with brave enthusiasm, putting his heart into the work of the hour, whatever it was. He loved work for work's sake, because his whole system was full of healthful, bounding life, and God and the world called him to "up and be doing."

The lessons he learned long ago at his wood-pile in the cold, dark winter mornings, were doing him good still: he was *thorough*

in whatever he undertook. Best of all, strong Christian principle influenced and guided his every action: no one could fail to see it.

Between him and Frank Moore, the only *merchants* of their set, there was a brisk, friendly emulation in business attainments which did them both good. Then he had not lost any of his merry good nature: his coming in always brought brightness and pleasure to them all.

What more did she want? she asked herself, after summing him up thus. Only to be sure she was not a bit crowded out, she half smiled. She almost wished she could have kept him always the *little* brother. Would they grow apart in the growth of the boy into the man? Boys so often think it childish to cling to the home loves, and manly to throw them away,—boys, I say; for men are wiser. And so, with a little sigh and an unconscious prayer, she left the window, and resumed her sewing.

I have said nothing of the progress of the war during this year. Does not every American boy know, and has not his heart thrilled

at the accounts of Malvern Hill, of Antietam, of 'Fredericksburg and Murfreesboro', of Chancellorsville and Gettysburg? And now our village, with the whole country, was rejoicing over the surrender of Vicksburg. People were wild with enthusiasm and joy, though every victory had been gained at such fearful costs.

Katie Claxton tried to lose herself in her love for her country, and give a whole-hearted rejoicing; but it was hard work, stanch little patriot though she was.

Richard Hathaway had had but one furlough in two years since he had enlisted with her full and free consent, and that was so brief and so long ago! For more than a month now she had heard no word from him, and her heart sickened with dread.

But the evening of this jubilant day brought the long-looked-for letters: better still, the letter was only the announcement of his own coming. He had been wounded, had suffered much in hospital, and had finally received his discharge, and hoped soon to be with them.

Oh the shattered wrecks that came to so

many homes, to so many silent, aching hearts! Katie had braced herself for the worst, and after the first few days Lieutenant Hathaway seemed to gain strength so rapidly that Robert wondered at the strange, strained look in Katie's eyes, and the deep reveries from which she started when addressed.

Then he thought her more selfish than he had ever known her. Of course she had the first claim upon Richard, and it was natural that they should want to be much together after their long separation. But he had been on the most cordial and familiar terms with all the family, and in the village he was universally popular, and every home was longing to welcome him; yet the greater part of every day and evening he spent at Katie's side, and it was of her planning—even Robert could see that.

She seemed jealously watchful of the briefest conversation he held with any one else. It was not like Katie. Robert pondered it all day long. Then, as he watched her so closely, he saw that she was not happy. She was nervous, and there were lines about

her eyes which looked as if the night brought no rest.

Mrs. Claxton was away from home on a visit. At first Robert had been on the point of speaking to his father about it; but a finer instinct taught him better. We should handle our friends' secrets as delicately and carefully as their jewels.

And so he kept his long watch. Often, when Katie's anxious eyes followed Richard when he left the house, Robert's rested upon her pale face till his own were full of tears. It is so hard for a boy to have a trouble on his mind that he cannot handle, a knot that he cannot untie! Two years ago Rob had said, "It is so hard to just sit and wait! a boy can't wait"; and it was hard yet. Once when they were alone, he had alluded playfully to the wedding; but Katie had turned from him with such a look of terror upon her face that Robert could see it all day.

So a week went by. Scores of times had Rob been upon the point of speaking to his father about it, and as many times had he checked himself, feeling that the secret, if

there were any, was Katie's, and it would grieve her if he should betray it. Captain Claxton had evidently not seen what troubled Rob so much. The intense heat told upon his enfeebled system, and while in the house he could only lie and rest.

Robert, in his busy, happy life, had seemed often rather careless and thoughtless; but now there was growing fast within him a tender, watchful, protecting care over others, which is one of the noblest attributes of manhood, without which it is always incomplete. Without knowing why, he grew almost as keen as Katie at turning remark or intrusion away from Richard, leaving him to her. He only knew that Katie turned toward him a look of intense relief. He could see too, that, when she left him to go to Richard, she did not act impatient to have him leave the house, as at first, but rather (if he read her face aright) as if she liked to know that he were somewhere near. One evening she had said tremulously, "Must you go out to-night, Robbie?"

. And he answered, "No, I shall stay here and .read," and wondered afterward that he

had been able to think so quickly what would be the right thing, when he had intended to walk down for a chat with Frank.

Apparently they were having a gay time in the parlor, for Richard two or three times shouted with laughter.

A little of the old feeling of jealousy came over Rob, for he had been quite a favorite with Hathaway, and he had seen so little of him since he came home. At last he heard him go away. Katie went with him to the door, and he had not heard her come in again. He was growing sleepy, and thought he would go to his own room.

As he passed the door he saw Katie's white dress at the gate, and then saw her sink down, and cover her face with her hands. Putting down his light, he went to her at once, closing the door behind him.

He had tried several times to plan some way of seeking her confidence; now he never thought of the way. He thought only of her; and, putting his arm around her, he raised her, for he was taller and stronger now than Katie, and said tenderly, "My poor Katie, you must tell me."

She was startled, and tried at first to draw away; but he held her gently. "I can help you, Katie; I know I can. Trust me," he said, kissing her.

"O Rob! dear Rob!" she said, laying her head upon his shoulder like a tired child. "Oh, I cannot tell it: can't you guess?" she whispered, holding his hand tightly. "You know he was wounded in his head."

Robert did guess. He had never dreamed of this, and for a moment he could not speak. It was too terrible. It was Katie who spoke first, and the five years between them seemed to have changed place, for it was she who looked up to him for counsel and advice.

"I am so glad that you know it now, Robert. What ought I to do? What can be done?"

He thought for a moment, stroking her damp hair softly. "You must go in and go to bed now, Katie," he said, for she was shivering in the heavy dew. "Let me think to-night."

"You will not tell any one else? Poor Richard! I can't bear that any one should know it as long as it can be helped."

"No : trust me, Katie. Is " — Robert hesitated. "Has it been ever since he came home?" he asked as delicately as he could.

"Yes : I saw that he was strange and wandering two or three times that first day. I thought then it was only because he was worn out. But, O Robert!" she said, with a burst of tears, "now he is scarcely himself for an hour at a time. What can be done for him? I cannot persuade him to go away for treatment when he does not know his need of it; and if he goes I must go too. Oh, I am so glad you know now! I have thought sometimes I was losing my reason too," she said sadly.

Robert went with her to her own room, closed the blind for her, went down stairs for a glass of fresh water, for she looked faint and exhausted, and then left her with a kind good-night, and a "God knows, my poor sister; and, thank God, Richard is his too."

She drew him back, kissing him fondly. "You have been such a comfort," she said.

"I will try to sleep now. You will think for me."

He left her, and went to his own room and threw himself upon the lounge. He had been so shocked. It was so terrible.

CHAPTER XIX.

ROBERT seemed to have grown years older in that hour. There are times in every life when one hour changes and develops, and does the work of months or years.

It was well that Robert knew where to go for wisdom in his inexperience. He kneeled down, and prayed that God would help him and guide him, and make him of great use, and then, oh, how fervently! that this terrible cloud might be lifted, and poor Hathaway restored.

Robert was quicker, more practical, than Katie, and it was this that made her feel that he could help her. He thought that no time should be lost; he knew too, and it did him good to know, that all that could be done must fall upon him: for Captain Claxton's strength was overtaxed now, and it was not fit that Katie should do any thing; he thought,

with a glow of true manly chivalry, he would shield and spare her all that was possible. Before he slept he had a plan fully arranged to lay before Katie.

But before he left his room in the morning there was a loud ring at the bell ; and, going down, he found Hathaway in the breakfast-room.

Captain Claxton and the children were not yet down. Katie looked annoyed and distressed when she invited him to breakfast, and waited nervously her father's coming.

Robert greeted the guest cordially, and, with a glance to Katie, said, "It is too early for breakfast ; take a walk with me, Hathaway. I have to open the store, and come back for my breakfast after father comes down ; come and be company for me. Katie must see that the bill of fare is just as good for the second table."

She answered lightly, but looked relieved and grateful as they went out.

For a few moments he observed no change in Richard, and was almost beginning to hope that Katie might in some strange way have

been mistaken, when he turned suddenly with a remark so utterly wild and vague that Robert's heart sank too heavily for him to reply, and he could not bear to look into the handsome, manly face. This was followed by a joke so foolish and senseless that it made Robert blush.

His quick afterthought was, "yet Katie, a sensitive woman, has suffered this day after day, and suffered it alone," and his eyes filled, and he choked, so that he could not have answered had there been any need; but there was not.

They left the store as soon as Captain Claxton came down, Robert shortening the meeting, and hurrying Richard away as anxiously as poor Katie would have done. During the breakfast Hathaway's gay mood entirely left him, and he was silent and moody. This was all the change that had been remarked in the village as yet. Robert had heard it several times, in the kindest sympathy, that Hathaway was so grave and quiet — hadn't got his spirits back yet, poor fellow!

After breakfast he went into the parlor with

the evident intention of spending the morning there. Robert drew Katie to the porch, and, seating her in the shade, told his plan. He thought Richard's parents should be informed at once of his condition, and consulted with. To do this by letter would be cruel and unsatisfactory, besides involving delay and uncertainty. Some one ought to go at once to C. "Father cannot, and you must not, dear."

"Oh, I couldn't!" said Katie, her pale cheeks flushing. "I have never seen them."

"No; but if you will trust me, Katie, I will do it the best I can. Only we must tell father all about it first. I cannot go unless he thinks it best; and, if he thinks my plan is not good, he will find a better. I have said nothing to him yet, because I would not without your leave."

"But I can't bear to tell him."

"No: there is no need of that. I will do that this morning; and then, if father approves, I will take the ten o'clock train. Mike will stay at the store while father comes to his meals, without asking any troublesome questions, and I shall probably return to-morrow."

Katie's face grew calmer than it had been for days. It seemed just what they ought to do, and leave the result with God. But it was like a dream. This boy, who had so lately strewed the floor with toys and whittlings, was now the thoughtful, manly protector, her support and comforter. Did she wish now that he were a child again?

"One thing, dear, you must promise me, that you will keep Sibyl or some one within call while Richard is with you."

"O Robert, you don't think Richard would hurt me? Oh, I am sure he would not!" and Katie looked grieved.

"Dear Katie," he said pityingly, "we cannot be sure. I cannot leave you unless you promise me."

"I will do as you say," she answered; and Robert left her.

It was hard to go to his father with any thing which must give him such pain; but it is no part of bravery to delay what must be done. At nine o'clock, having secured Mike's services, and with his father's full commendation of his course, he returned to

the house for the few preparations which he needed, and at ten he set out on his painful errand.

Robert reached C. at four o'clock, and had little difficulty in finding the handsome residence of old Mr. Hathaway. He made his sad revelation as gradually and gently as he could,—not with finely-gotten-up sentences; for, if he had prepared any, they were all gone at the old man's first eager delight when he learned that he was a friend of his Richard. His deep sympathy and grief for the poor father made its own way best; and when it was over, and the white-haired old man knew all he had to tell, Robert could only remain silent, and his own tears fell fast while for a few moments the father bowed beneath the stroke.

"And you came all the way to tell me yourself, young sir? God bless you, and your sister too! We have heard so much of her that we learned to love her long ago."

"You could not help it, if you knew her, sir," said Robert in boyish ardor.

Mr. Hathaway proposed to return with him on the early morning train. But after he had imparted the sad intelligence to his wife, and spent a night of sleepless anxiety, he was almost unfitted for the journey. Robert saw it, and, without troubling him with any protestations or offers of assistance, he quietly took upon himself all the arrangements of the way, bought the ticket (which the old gentleman forgot), laid the morning paper by his side without speaking, and left him to recover himself, or sleep if he could.

When they arrived at the village, it was Robert who arranged his first meeting with his son so that Richard should not suspect that he had not come of his own accord, and softened the shock as much as possible for all. Katie trusted him in every thing, yielding implicitly to the guidance so new, yet so tender and thoughtful.

Young Hathaway proposed himself accompanying his father home at once, taking leave of poor Katie with cheerful assurances that he should return, as soon as he was quite strong again, to resume his old business.

The last hour that he spent with them was as if it had been given as a precious parting token to the aching hearts left behind. He had not been so like his old self since his return, the life of the party, happy in his father's presence and in his tender admiration of his Katie; and they parted with him full of hope, that, under the skilful treatment he would receive in the city, he would be speedily restored.

But a week later a telegram arrived announcing his severe illness, and summoning Katie to his side.

The message was directed to Robert, and to him fell the painful task of bearing the sad news to his sister, and sustaining her as he could. It was Robert too who accompanied her to the Hathaway home, and watched with and for her at the dying-bed.

I believe she would have died too if it had not been for this young brother's tender sympathy and care. He was young and strong, he could bear watching and fatigue; and Richard always knew him, and liked to have him wait upon him, so that the old father

and mother were never taxed beyond their strength.

At the last the cloud which had obscured the poor soldier's reason passed entirely away, and the whole last day was one of such sweet and precious communion together, such bright anticipations of the better life after "the little while" that they seemed lifted above their sorrow, and the Comforter himself was with them.

"Sing, some one," he said, "I see the light of heaven."

Katie began, —

"Jerusalem the golden,"

but the effort was too much for her. Robert's voice, grown deep and full, took it up and sang it through.

When it was finished, he saw that it was all over; and, trying to be calm and strong for the sake of those who suffered yet more, he put his arm around Katie and drew her away, feeling that now more than ever she belonged to him.

CHAPTER XX.

JOHN GRAHAM had worked hard during his vacation, and earned a small sum, which he hoarded carefully for future expenses. His wardrobe would do without much replenishing for some time; he would not need, and it would not be suitable that he should have, very fine clothing in his position as one of the janitors of the college.

This position chafed and irritated Frank more than any thing usually did. Sharing the friendship of all, he knew the costly preparations which were in progress for both Charlie and Dorr, saw the new Saratoga trunks filled with stylish suits and apparel, and knew that lavish purses would surround them with comfort and luxury and hosts of friends.

John had been eight years winning one friend under more favorable circumstances than his humble college life would afford.

His scanty purse would command no luxuries, scarcely the comforts which his delicate constitution demanded; while the rapt enthusiasm with which he longed to be ready to enter upon his life work, and which made him care little whether the way which led to it were rough or smooth, so that it carried him over, made Frank fear that his zeal would go beyond his strength.

Two weeks before Graham left (rather sooner than was necessary) Frank had given him a sealed envelope, under promise that it should not be opened until he was fairly out of the village. And then the grave charges which our little Frank, for little he always would be, gave him about taking care of himself, and the grandmotherly anxiety of the little fellow over the tall, dignified student, would have been amusing if they had not been so good and true.

Frank had never known, until this breaking-up of the set, how much more John Graham was to him than any of the others. It brought no new revelation to John. Frank was to him all that sisters, brothers, and

companions are to other boys; he was all he had, and, if he could have taken Frank with him into the life upon which he was entering, he would have had nothing to wish for, no matter how he lived.

In a little, cheerless back room, where even the outlook was cramped and crowded, John Graham opened the envelope which Frank had given him two weeks before. It contained a small sum of money in new, crisp bank-bills, which had been laid by month by month, the half of "the eighth" consecrated from the very first to this purpose, but after much cogitation consigned to this envelope, because Frank couldn't get up the courage to hand it to John, and say to his face what he wanted to say about it.

The letter ran thus:—

"MY BROTHER JOHN,—This is only a little sum, and it isn't worth while to say all about how much I wish it was a hundred times more, because you will know that, and it is just a bother to write about it. But this much I shall send you every quarter, and you must

take it and use it without any remark; not because it would grieve me if you should not, because I know very well you would swallow that little pill, even if it did choke, if you thought it ought to be done. But you won't when you have heard what I have to say. I am not giving it to *you*, but to the Lord. He never called me to preach, never made me for that; I have always been very clear upon that point. But I do love him, and I always wanted to have some share in this part of his work. I can help others who are called to fit themselves. I have set apart this proportion of my salary: the sum will increase as my salary increases, which I mean it shall every year. If you do not take it, it will go just the same, but to a stranger instead of my only brother, and you know very well I could not enjoy it half so much as I shall now. After you are finished and settled, you shall help me to find another, and then another student, and so, don't you see, in a sort of a way I can preach too? And now, old fellow, good-by again. Oh, another thing; you see this is the Lord's, and not mine at all any more, so you

need only say that you get it. How I shall miss you, and plan for your vacations! Take good care of yourself, and don't work too hard.

FRANK."

If Charlie had seen John Graham over that letter, I don't think he would have thought him so very "calm and dignified."

He read it over and over, with the tears streaming down his face, until he knew every word by heart; then he took Frank's photograph out of his pocket and looked at it, and then read the letter again, and folded both together in a piece of white paper, and then put them in his pocket-book; and then took them both out for another look, and I am not sure but he kissed them both, though he would not have thought of kissing Frank's real flesh-and-blood face.

The getting fairly settled and shaken down in his new place and new duties was just a succession of trials to a lad so shy and so sensitive; but it was over at last, and he knew what his studies and his work were to be.

One of the faculty (with mistaken kindness),

seeing John's manly desire to be independent, found for him a situation where he had an hour's copying furnished him every day in addition to his other duties. This hour was taken from his study-hours, so he made up for it by studying half, sometimes two-thirds, of the night, which is a sin, though John had not thought of that.

But it is. When God gives us this delicate, complicated, wonderful machine which we call the body, and of which we cannot make a single vein, or bone, or nerve, surely the least we can do is to take good care of it. It will serve us well, — God meant it should, — but it will not bear abuse.

Graham made no advances toward friendship with any of his classmates, and he was "the janitor," and *they* made none; but he did not have much time to feel lonely, and they were none of them Frank, anyway. Yet he always found time to write a long letter every week. And such letters! He was an odd fellow; his pen unlocked his heart more readily than his tongue could, and Frank really felt that he loved Graham more, and knew him better,

after three months' correspondence than in all their personal intercourse.

He was certainly a better correspondent than Dorr. "What ailed Dorr?" Frank and Rob asked each other. Except a brief letter soon after his arrival, neither of them had heard one word from him.

Charlie wrote bright, merry letters, "as if college were all high carnival," the boys said. At last, in answer to some question from Rob, he said Dorr was well, and getting on famously. There was not a more popular fellow in the whole class; he [Charlie] was half jealous, only Dorr was such a splendid fellow; he never would have found out in that old humdrum town that he was such a born prince.

This information, however it might have been intended, was not very satisfying, neither was the tone altogether pleasant, though neither Frank nor Rob said so.

CHAPTER XXI.

GRAHAM had made no calculation for coming home at the holidays, he could not incur the expense for so short vacation ; but the boys were all counting a good deal upon Charlie and Dorr's home-coming. Charlie was such an old favorite of Robert's, and, if there were any thing amiss with Dorr, it would be all right after that.

The week came and went. It was not very pleasant after all. Charlie brought one friend with him, and Dorr two. True the old set met them frequently, and tried to believe the reunion was delightful ; but they saw nothing of Charlie or Dorr except in the company of their guests.

Captain Blakeslee determined to make the week a gala time ; gave a Christmas party, to which all the young people were invited, and which Dorr made very delightful to every one.

He did not stay to the Bible-class on Sunday; but perhaps his friends did not wish to, and Dorr did not think it courteous to send them home without him. And he was not at the prayer-meeting; but Captain Blakeslee was very sick that evening, perhaps Dorr would have been there if it had not been for that.

And so the week was gone, and they went back, and none of them knew whether Dorr were really changed, or whether it was only their fancy. Perhaps they were a little jealous; Dorr was so self-possessed, so elegant in his manners, a really brilliant young *man* — he seemed to have quite left his boyhood.

Robert and Frank did not like to own to themselves that perhaps they were a little “green” and “countrified” beside these young collegians, and they scarcely liked to talk much about it anyway, for fear it would be acknowledging as much. Only Rob did say once confidentially to Frank, when they were speaking of Graham, that he half wished Dorr and Charlie had staid away for their vacation too.

Dorr had apologized generously for his remissness in writing, and promised to do better; but it was a long time before the letter came. It did come, though, at last, and we will give it just as it was written:—

“MY TRIED OLD FRIEND, — You have found I did not keep my promise; but, if that were the only promise I had failed to keep, I should not come to you now with a story so sad and long that I almost dread to grieve you with it. Rob, I have lost my Saviour, lost my hope in Christ, all my purpose in life, all my peace of mind; and what it is to lose them, and yet live in God's world, and breathe God's air, and feel that only his mercy keeps you alive, keeps you from sinking down beyond all mercy, God grant you may never know! Do you care to go back along this road, and trace my fall? You will think, perhaps, that I gave way under some terrible trial. Not at all. I have turned the Lord's very mercies against him, and went down through the very blessings which left me nothing to wish for. When I left home, my kind father

placed in my pocket-book for my quarter's allowance money enough, it seemed to me then, to last through the four years. We furnished our room elegantly, giving free indulgence to our tastes, and sparing no expense.

"It is a charming place. I wish you could see it now, with the sunset brightening every part of it. But I do not love it now. It has never had the light which Mr. Brady's room had. I used to think sometimes the *Shechinah* filled that with glory, or even the *mow* in my father's barn — do you remember it, Robert? — where we spent the next morning after you told me that the Lord had called me. Oh that I should ever have dared to cherish such a purpose, and then have turned my back upon the Saviour I once loved so much!

"I came to college determined to study and improve every advantage, and I suppose some do; but certainly none of my associates here. I do not mention this to excuse myself, Robert, — I have no excuse to offer, — but only as a simple fact, that you may understand the case better. We were surrounded

by gay, rich young gentlemen of culture and polish, who sought our acquaintance in a way which flattered us, and made me, at least, an easy prey to temptation. Let me say here I do not wish to say any thing against Charlie. He has never in any way done any thing which he thought an unkindness to me. If he has helped to draw my soul from God, he had known no better way: he did not know what he was doing to me; he broke no vows. It was I that should have led him.

“My first wrong step—I can see it so clearly now!—was that I did not take a decided stand for Christ in the first place. The neglect was not intentional then, only nothing seemed to call it out at once; and then, before I knew, they had assumed that I was like the rest of them, and, when I had been here only three weeks, I felt that it would be a *surprise* to them to know that I was a professed follower of Christ.

“If I could only have this year to live over again, if I could only enter these halls again, with the hopes and principles I had

then, or thought I had, I should have it understood as soon as my name was known, 'I am the Lord's.' It is easy enough to do so. I have seen it in others since, and felt that I could have kissed the very hem of their garments.

"The evident preference of these dashing fellows for my society flattered me, though I would not own it to myself. They invited freely, and we responded as freely; and the time which I came here to devote to study and to preparation for the most glorious work ever given to man, has been spent in pleasure—or we called it so. Robert, I have been gay,—brilliant, they have said,—but I have never been happy one moment.

"At last, one night two weeks since, there was a gay midnight party in our room. I was wild with wine and merriment, and they were laughing and shouting, when one of them exclaimed,—

" 'By the way, Blakeslee, I heard the oddest thing the other day, the greatest hoax of the season. Betts said he overheard down to your place, in vacation, that you were going to be a minister.'

"There was a shout. Betts stammered something about that he must have misunderstood; and I — O Robert! — I hesitated only for a moment, and then I *denied* it with light, bantering words.

"I cannot tell you what I suffered for the remaining hour which they spent there, while I sustained the character of the jovial host. Conscience, which had been only lulled, was fully aroused now, and doing her work.

"When the last one had gone, and we were alone, I began to wish them back: I could not bear the quiet. Charlie innocently congratulated me upon my self-possession — said I did not even change color when I denied Betts's report. I turned to him fiercely, with an oath: I scarcely knew what I said. Charlie must have exercised a great deal of forbearance.

"I did not go to bed for the few morning hours. I longed to go outside the walls, and be alone. It irritated me that Charlie did not go to sleep at once. I think he saw it, and feigned sleep at first; but I sat the wretched

night out. It was only one of many wretched nights.

“Be patient, Robert, my long story is nearly done. I have dropped my old companions, not because I am better than they, — not one of them has fallen as I have, — but I have no desire even to see them. I try to study, but I take in no ideas; I have nothing to study for, and nothing to look forward to here and beyond. But I do not think so much of that fearful punishment which I deserve as I do of the *Friend* I have lost, who was once so precious to me, whom I have insulted and denied. O Robert, I did love him so in the old times! I felt his presence almost as if he were visible to my eyes. I cannot bear to think of it; I cannot hope for any thing, and after all this I shall never dare to pray again. I have told you all now. DORR.”

Robert's answer, which was written and mailed within the half-hour, was characteristic:—

“MY DEAR FRIEND, — So did Peter; yet the Lord loved him all the time. He would not

have grieved so over his fall if he hadn't. And did he ever tell Peter that he should not preach to other sinners because he had been too great a sinner himself? But don't stay away from your Saviour another minute, Dorr; that's worst of all. If you had offended me ever so much, and treated me ever so badly, you would not be afraid to come and tell me that you were sorry. Are you more sure of *me* than of Jesus? Go then, do, and make it all up with him. Don't you remember he said that the woman who had had so many sins forgiven loved the more? Can't you? I believe, Dorr, you will preach yet, and preach all the better for this. Another thing, I felt grateful because you came to me in your trouble and repentance: it seemed to me a proof of your friendship; and I think,—I don't know as I can make you understand just what I mean, but it seems to me Jesus must be glad too when sorrow, or even sin and shame, bring us nearer to him. I shall not be easy till I hear from you again, and, till you can pray for yourself, I shall pray for you.

“Your friend, ROB.

“P.S. — Couldn't you come home?”

Before Robert's letter reached its destination, Captain Blakeslee was much surprised and alarmed at receiving a letter from Charlie Elliott, saying that he thought Dorr was quite unwell, more seriously so than he was willing to acknowledge; that he [Charlie] had become alarmed, and took the liberty of writing to inform his father without consulting Dorr. He thought Dorr ought to leave college for a time; he was studying very hard (which was true now). And finally, if he might be allowed to suggest, he hoped the captain would find some pretext for summoning Dorr home without betraying his connection in the matter.

Captain Blakeslee sent at once for Dorr, saying that he had fancied in his last one or two letters that he was a bit homesick; and he had hoped it was true, for they must have him back to the old place for a time. He wa'n't right well himself, and there was no telling what might happen: he was getting to be an old man, and it would cheer him up mightily if Dorr could come. And this keen, sharp air and the mountains of snow were enough sight better than smoky college-halls.

So Dorr came, and was happily surprised to find the old captain hale and hearty as ever, chuckling over the success of his ruse. He had received Rob's letter only the night before his father's. It had brought him his first gleam of hope; but here, where every thing spoke of his fall, where the very walls seemed to mock him with the echo of his denial and of his oath, he was clogged with the same despondent feeling that it was presumptuous for him to seek forgiveness.

But when he entered his own little room at home, hallowed by so many seasons of sweet communion, the very air seemed to soothe him. Like Pilgrim's resting-place in the House Beautiful, "the name of the chamber was Peace."

The Lord is everywhere; but here in the draperied nook by the window, where he had talked with him so often, his presence seemed still to abide. Here the doubt and despair which had held him from the mercy-seat melted away, and with tender memories crowding upon him, he came broken-hearted, like a child, to his Father. And the dear old expe-

rience which was Peter's once, and has been so many poor backsliders' since,—of Jesus' readiness to forgive, and the joy and peace which follow such forgiveness,—was Dorr's.

CHAPTER XXII.

Just before the close of the college year John Graham had the offer of a lucrative engagement for the vacation, the remuneration for which would go far toward defraying his expenses for the next year.

It was a hard struggle to give up seeing Frank's face for another whole year; he took two days to think of it, and more than once he almost decided that he could not make the sacrifice. Who could tell what might be before another year should roll along? They might never meet again; he must see his brother, he was homesick for him, and he had counted the weeks and the days. This was his one pleasure, his only luxury, and how could he give it up?

Did you ever read in the Bible that it is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth? Do you know why?

The discipline and self-denial had made John Graham's soul strong and brave; he had never been accustomed to indulgence, he could bear denial now. It was such an unexpected opening! the Lord must have placed it there, for he needed it. Then his strong faith chided the thought that God could not keep them both through the coming year as he had in the past.

And so it was a very grave, decided letter which informed Frank of the change in his plans; but its very brevity told to his observant friend how much the decision had cost.

Frank was reading the letter in the store, and the look of blank dismay and disappointment which clouded his sunny face made Mr. Norton say inquiringly, "You have received bad news, Frank?"

And Frank, in the fulness of his disappointment, told the whole story, and then slowly folded the letter.

Mr. Norton was called to another part of the store before he had expressed any sympathy in the matter, and Frank resumed his duties with a weight upon his spirits quite unusual to him.

When he was arranging the shelves before closing the store at night, Mr. Norton said suddenly, "Frank, why not go yourself to spend a little time with your friend? When the mountain couldn't come to Mahomet, you remember, like any man of sense, he went to the mountain. I have been thinking it all over: you have been a trusty, faithful clerk, not a bit afraid of doing too much, and I think you deserve a little play-spell. It will do you good, and be a cheery surprise to your friend."

Frank was too happy to find his tongue at once. Mr. Norton saw it, and went on, —

"So as soon as we are through invoicing, off with you for two weeks, and I will see that you lose nothing by it."

Frank wrote a very subdued letter to his friend, breathing of most sublime patience and resignation, — rather too high-flown not to excite a little surprise, — adding that "in the way of duty the months of separation would be but weeks or days."

Frank was never sentimental, never "talked on stilts," as boys say, and always wrote as

he talked; this letter was not natural, and John, who would not have liked him changed in any way, read it for the third time, and put it away with a vague feeling of dissatisfaction.

No trip to Europe was ever anticipated more eagerly than Frank's visit. He made two or three not expensive but well-chosen purchases for presents to his friend; and Dorr and Rob both claimed the privilege of showing their remembrance in the same way. Mr. Jones and Mr. Brady too, upon learning Frank's intention, added their offerings with many kind messages.

All Frank's plans, which he had dreamed of by day and night, were carried out to the minutest detail without any failures, so that he stood fairly at John's door without his friend being in the least conscious of the happiness which awaited him.

"Come in," he said, in answer to Frank's knock, supposing it the return of the servant who had left the room a moment before. Occupied with his book, with his back to the door, he did not look up when Frank

entered, and, seeing his pre-occupation, coolly took the only vacant chair in the room, and waited.

After a moment John turned, and the look in his face as he sprang forward, the tears of joy which filled his eyes, crowned all Frank's plots with success.

There could hardly be more complete happiness on earth than that poor little attic held that evening. John felt as if the world held nothing now for him to wish for; and there was only one drawback to Frank's enjoyment. He found John pale, overworked, and easily exhausted. He had never been robust; but a year had changed him sadly.

Some things in his position Frank saw might and ought to be improved: so, without consulting John, he found out the proper persons to look to for redress, and went to them in behalf of his friend's comfort, presenting the case as he knew he would never do for himself.

In many ways his tasks were lightened, his merit made apparent, and his position every way made more pleasant and comforta-

ble. But not until after Frank's return did John know that he owed it to him.

After a few days Frank became a little accustomed to Graham's paler face, and indeed the happy excitement and recreation of those two weeks improved him wonderfully for the time; so that Frank took leave of him without any especial alarm upon his account. But after the fall term began, his letters bore increasing evidence of failing health.

At Christmas Graham wrote, —

“I have asked and received permission from uncle Mark to come and stay with him for a time. I hope I may be able to render him service enough to pay for my board. Do not blame me, my dear brother, that I have not written you of my sickness before. I had hoped I should regain my strength and not be obliged to leave. I do so now under the positive order of my physician. I could not bear to write to you until uncle Mark had promised to open his doors to me, for I knew just what you would say and do. But my dear Frank, though we are brothers beloved, your father is not my father, and

though he is kind and generous, I have no claim upon him. You must let me keep my poor little pride, Frank, it is such a very modest kind, and claims so little. Your affection and patience I shall draw upon largely enough. I am coming next week. What the result will be, whether I shall ever return, I try to leave with God."

Frank was inexpressibly shocked at the change in his friend; but he talked hopefully of the cure which rest and out-door exercise would be sure to bring; and, if John was less sanguine, he would not pain Frank by telling him so.

There were other changes which day by day (for his few leisure hours were all John's) Frank came to notice in his home life. During all the years he had lived with his uncle and aunt, I believe I told you there had been no kindness or affection between them. He did faithfully what was required of him, fully compensating, after the first year or two, for the board and clothing which they provided for him. He was always obedient and respectful, they rarely ever severe or unjust; further than

this both parties let each other alone, and felt no more interest than if they were strangers. But now, after his absence of nearly a year and a half, John's eyes were opened, and he saw changes which grieved him. His relatives were growing old, they needed the kind attentions of sons and daughters, and their home was desolate and lonely. His uncle had many annoyances in his business: the first lad who had taken John's place in the shop had defrauded him and run away: his successor was an insolent, thriftless fellow, who never did any thing he could leave undone. It grieved John now, as it never used to in the old days, to see his uncle annoyed and imposed upon.

As far as his strength would permit, he exerted himself to spare him, and keep an eye over things which were going wrong. For his aunt, too, he showed a kind thoughtfulness to which she was so unaccustomed she scarcely knew how to receive it.

His uncle said to his wife one evening, as he drew up to the fire after a comparatively smooth day in the shop, "It is a comfort to

have one of one's own kith and kin around, that takes some interest in seeing that every thing don't go to wreck and ruin."

John from his room beyond heard it, and was pleased; he had not expected that his efforts would be noticed.

Another thing Frank saw, John was so careful to leave no day unfinished. If he fancied that he had said any thing that might leave a wrong impression or an unkind feeling, it was always made right, so far as lay in his power, before the day closed. His work, even his books and papers, were all in perfect order when he retired to rest; and Frank could not doubt that he was as careful in his inner life.

Once involuntarily he spoke of it when he saw him arranging his room. John turned to him without answering in words, but with a strange, sweet smile which made Frank's heart throb with anguish. Robert and Dorr, and the other friends who came often to sit with the invalid, marked sadly the waning life; but Frank would not. He talked more and with more certainty of John's recovery, and all their future plans of usefulness.

For a few days Graham did not check him, he only let Frank talk, finding enough enjoyment in the sound of his voice and in the consciousness of having him near; but at last one day he said, —

“Sit forward a little, Frank, where I can see you” (for John was lying down). “Now listen to me, my precious brother: I shall never preach; my work is almost finished — finished before it is begun.”

Frank tried to shake his head, but only clasped Graham's hand closer, and buried his face in the pillow. John laid his other hand in the thick brown curls, and whispered, —

“I came home to die so, with you close by me, you are all I have to leave. I could not die away from you, my Frank.”

Frank sobbed aloud, then he said impetuously, “It cannot be so: God would not cut you off when you can and will do so much good.”

“Hush, dear!” said John. “I see a good many things now to which I used to be blind. It is I who have done it, Frank, and this is what I wanted courage to tell you. God is

not to be blamed when we destroy his work. I undermined my health by my own imprudence. I spent my small strength recklessly, and I alone am to blame for the consequences."

"But you did it in zeal to enter his service, John."

Graham was silent a moment, and a faint color came into his cheek.

"I thought so too; but I am not at all sure of it. They pointed me out as 'such a close student,' an 'indefatigable worker,' and told of my labors; and I was so weak and foolish. I am afraid, Frank, vanity as much as zeal urged me on." He waited a moment to rest.

"So I *wasted* myself: the life which belonged to God and you, and the souls which I might have won to him. Never call it God's mysterious providence, Frank, now, nor when you may see it in others. But God has forgiven me, and pitied my weakness; and now though, if it had been his will to make over this wonderful system which I have pulled down, I would rather have lived to do his work on earth,

the work which I have so longed to do, yet since it cannot be, I am grateful, and content to die with you at my side."

Another time, when he marked sadly the traces of anguish on Frank's bright face, he said, —

"I wish I could comfort you as God comforts me. I wish I could make you see, as I do now, that it is no idle saying, that 'to depart and be with Christ is far better'; that heaven is a real, a lovely, home; that Jesus is the complete satisfaction of every wish." And after a few moments, "And then I have no doubt for you to disturb me. I know that you will live to serve the Lord and men, — a useful and perhaps a long life; but I know you will always love me, and we shall never be quite separated. I shall tell mother what you are to me, and I shall be waiting, and you will be coming."

And so, with a smile of perfect content, his hand in Frank's, he laid aside the weary, aching frame, and entered upon the glorious life of heaven.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"How are you, Will Harnden? Why, I thought you were clerking for Bent."

"Well, I was; but he is a regular old grind. I wouldn't stand it. He makes a regular drudge out of a fellow."

"Why, Al Barton got along nicely there."

"Al is a spooney. *I* wo'n't be run over."

"Well," said Rob with a curious smile, "what was the matter at Wolcott's?"

"He was well enough; but the work was too hard. It would have killed me in less than no time. I wa'n't used to it."

"No?" said Rob, the slight raising of his eyebrows expressing more than his answer; and he passed on.

They did not meet very often now: their widely-differing purposes and associations made them almost strangers when they did meet. The idle, purposeless, sneering boy had devel-

oped into the incapable, envious, unprincipled young man, and now it was a problem to find any place small enough for him to fit. He had tried a dozen, even to enlisting, and getting the bounty, and then deserting. He has quite dropped out of the society of our village; for the low, impure tastes of the boy who was proud to declare he was no "gal-boy" have made a man whom no young lady cares to recognize; and the boys whom he once called "our set," those of them who remain here, are now the sterling young men of our community.

Time and the prosperity following the close of the war have made changes in our village: some are even looking forward to a city-charter and a daily paper. We have a Young Men's Christian Association, with a fine library and reading-room, and among the officers, and always generous supporters, you will find Robert Claxton, Francis B. Moore, and Michael Rooney.

Two years ago, two new signs were hung out over the handsomely-refitted stores, "Claxton & Son," and "Norton & Moore." Sibyl

Claxton and Winnie Griffiths, two of our prettiest young ladies, and as sensible and useful as they are pretty, think these two small improvements (which Winnie dubbed "rewards of merit") are quite as judicious and promising as the new national banks.

Everywhere where there is work to be done, earnest Christian work, whether it is assisting the pastor, teaching the children, sympathizing with the afflicted, relieving the suffering, or lifting the fallen and supporting the struggling, wherever willing hands and warm hearts can help, you will find these four, "our boys and girls" who played together in the old school-yard. And they are wielding an influence which makes society better in every grade. Yet these two were no uncommon boys, no book prodigies, just the average, every-day boy, like yourself. But they set out, when they were boys, for God and the right, and they made the very most of themselves, using diligently just the common talents and common advantages which God gave them—and so may you.

And Charlie Elliott—what of him? I wish

I could count him one of those. While Dorr was at home from college, Charlie and his companions, grown bolder in their reckless disregard of rules, went beyond all bounds. They were discovered, and Charlie and two others expelled. Thus awakened to the realities of his conduct and his standing, and overwhelmed with shame, poor Charlie fled the city before the intelligence had reached his home. I think nothing, not even John Graham's death, has ever caused such grief in our community. For Graham, we knew that it was only our loss, he was only going a little before us; but our bright, handsome Charlie, who had a pleasant word for everybody, who had been more than any other boy the pet of the village — how could he have fallen so?

Yet, boys, poor Charlie is not a solitary or remarkable case. He was naturally agreeable and pleasant, high-toned and generous; yet none of these traits which made him so winning were grounded in principle. His was a fine temperament; and all the surroundings of a refined home, fond, companionable parents, and associates whose aims and pur-

suits were high and honorable, had kept him smoothly in the path of honor. When equally potent influences drew him downwards, his "right-good fellowship" made it an easy, almost a natural, thing that he should fall. Poor Charlie! a wanderer upon the face of the earth, not even his stricken parents, whose home he has made desolate, know where he is. There may be hope for him yet: Rob will not give him up.

Dorr Blakeslee is preaching the pure gospel, in all its lowly simplicity, in a city church, where the rich and the fashionable throng to hear his eloquence, though the strong truth comes bravely, without fear or favor. Then he leaves his elegantly-cushioned pulpit, and in the highways and hedges, the courts and alleys, where the poor congregate, with the same glowing eloquence he offers to them too this free salvation. And, like his Master, the common people hear him gladly; for he has aided them in their poverty, pitied them in their weakness and sin, and wept with them over their dead. He knows the thorny road of the backslider and the forgiveness

which awaits the repentant prodigal. He has been forgiven much, and he loves much.

He is so full, too, of bounding, joyous life, so happy, and full of bright sayings, that he wins all hearts. But he is still "our Dorr," and the first-fruit of his labors, given to cheer his grateful heart, when he returned from his backsliding, was his fond old father.

But have you ever heard of our Mr. Rooney? We are quite proud of him. Though it is only two years since he was admitted to the bar, I believe he has more practice than any lawyer in the county.

Mr. Westlake has retired from active business. Mike's first case (I mean to tell you about his second one too, by and by) was a decided success, and made an open road to fame and fortune. He has such a careful, thorough knowledge and accurate understanding of the law that his opinion almost amounts to a decision. Better still, he is known far and near as an honest, incorruptible lawyer: try him with bribes, or any of those specious reasonings by which the black of wrong is daubed to appear white, if you want to feel

the sharp wit, the stinging lash, of his Irish tongue.

Mike is a favorite with me, as he is with most; but as I set out to tell you the whole story, I must tell you about that second case.

It was a quarrel which had grown out of a ridiculous trifle, but had grown to enormous dimensions, till grave questions and a very bitter state of feeling between two families of wealth and position were involved in it. For so young and inexperienced a lawyer to be retained by such parties was a triumph in itself.

Mr. Westlake was out of town: I don't think he would have interfered, however: he had endeavored by constant precept and practice through all the years to imbue his ward with thorough integrity, and now he was a man with a man's individual responsibility.

Mike received the unexpected call of his patron with ready politeness. The gentleman was a very plausible diplomate, but Mike's perceptions were not at all dull: he saw just as clearly then as he did a month later that his oily-tongued client had neither right nor

justice on his side. The fee offered was astonishing to our boy of the bogs, but I think even that was not so great a temptation for the moment as the professional one; for he saw at a glance the weak points in the opponent's cause, and that the whole thing afforded an almost boundless field for his Irish wit.

He took the case, and made himself master of it; but no one ever saw Mike Rooney so restless, so curt and brusque in his ways; and several times he greeted Robert with a stare from eyes as round and stupid as those he brought to Mr. Jones's school so long ago.

The court is not held in our village: Mike was but little known then, and his personal appearance is not prepossessing. Though he has improved a great deal, he is far from handsome yet; his face is still freckled, and his hair, though not untidy now, is still uncommonly coarse ("exaggerated," Mike says) and an ugly color. But he carried every thing before him that day with a flood-tide of wit and humor, till the crowded court-room rang with peals and shouts.

JUL 9 1897

Of course he won the case, and his admirers would have carried him from the room on their shoulders, but he repelled them gruffly, and, springing on his horse, was almost the first to leave the scene.


That evening he received a fulsome letter of grateful compliment from his wealthy client, and a large addition to the promised fees. Mike was alone in the office; he read the letter, made a wry face, and, throwing it into the stove, rose, and walked the floor.

When Mr. Westlake returned, every one but the hero himself told him "Rooney's wonderful stroke." Knowing nothing of the merits of the case, he was much gratified, and appealed to Mike for all the particulars.

"They are there; you can read them if you like," said Mike, with very unnatural churlishness, as he handed him the paper, and then sat down with burning cheeks to stare at him as he read.

After a time Mr. Westlake's face grew grave, and he leaned forward with knitted brows; still Mike sat and stared.

A gentleman entered; it was Mike's late client. Mr. Westlake rose.



"Ah, Mr. Searles, walk in. I was just reading this suit of yours."

Mike rose hastily, nearly upsetting his chair. "You have no business with me, of course, Mr. Searles, so I will bid you good-morning."

"Why, Mr. Rooney, I"—but Mike was gone. Mr. Searles looked after him in blank amazement.

"Odd fellow, that," said he.

"How so?" Mr. Westlake was a little nettled.

"Perhaps this note which I received from him last night will best account for my remark. The whole amount of fees was enclosed."

Mr. Westlake took the paper and read, —

"Michael Rooney returns the twenty pieces of silver for which he sold his conscience, and resumes herewith the possession of that valuable article now and forever."

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